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T H E
G R O U N D S
O F T H E
Present Differences,
A M O N G T H E
L O N D O N M I N I S T E R S.

In Two Parts.

P A R T. I.

A DISSERTATION concerning the Authority of Scripture.
Consequences in Matters of Faith,
Being

An ANSWER to Mr. Evans's Letter;
To which is added

A POSTSCRIPT relating to the *Sonship* of Christ, shewing
the Uncertainty of the main Principle on which the *Arians*
found their Faith in a Dependent GOD; with a particular
Reference to Dr. Clark's Scheme.

P A R T II.

CONSIDERATIONS on the *Profess'd Agreement* of the Non-
Subscribing Ministers, with the *Subscribers*, in their Sentiments
concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity.

Wherein

Some of the principal *Passages* in both Parts of the *Reply* are im-
partially Examined; and the *Subscribers* cleared from the Charge
of Imposition.

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THE
GR O U N D S

of the
Present Differences

AMONG THE
London Ministers

in Two Parts.



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THE
PREFACE.



SHALL not seek to prepossess the Mind of the Reader with any other Expectation of what he is to meet with, in the following Papers, than that I have endeavour'd to state and vindicate a

Doctrine of such universal Influence on reveal'd Religion, that all true Regards to the genuine Faith of the Gospel must stand or fall with it; and to shew the Weakness and Fallacy of those Objections that have been of late urg'd against it.

I could have answer'd the Reverend Mr. Evans's Letter to me in a very narrow Compass, and without answering his good Design. But I was unwilling to leave in the Dark a Subject of so great Importance as the Authority of Scripture-Consequences in determining Articles of Faith must be acknowledged to be. I concluded it would be more

iv P R E F A C E.

satisfactory to *him*, and of more Service to the *Interests of Christianity*, to pursue his *Intentions* than barely to answer *himself*. I have therefore not only shew'd his *Mistakes*, but all along struck at the *Foundation* of them; and discover'd the absurd *Consequences* of those *Principles* on which his *Objections* against what I had said must stand, of which he might not be aware.

THIS oblig'd me to enter deeper into the *Merits* of the present *Controversy*, between the *SUBSCRIBING* and *NON-SUBSCRIBING Ministers*, than I at first intended. I know not that I have given any *just Cause of Offence* to the Brethren on the *other Side*, whom I highly esteem and honour. It cannot be grievous to *them* to have the *Grounds* of our unhappy *Differences* set in a true *Light*. When we understand one another, it will be more easy to accommodate *Matters* betwixt those who are *indeed* agreed in the *same common Faith*.

CONSIDERING the *Circumstances* we are now under, nothing was more necessary to be discuss'd, than the *Profess'd Agreement* of the *Non-Subscribing Ministers* with the *Subscribers*, in their *Sentiments* concerning the *Doctrine* of the *TRINITY*. If I have been so unhappy as to mistake the *Sense* of my Brethren on *this*, or any *other Head*, there are those, I doubt not, who have *Capacity* to set me *Right*. Only I
may

P R E F A C H. IV

may be allow'd to say before hand, that I shall not think myself concern'd in any Thing but *Argument*, nor in any *Appearance of Argument* that is not directly to the *Point*.

I am not sensible that I have exaggerated Matters in any part of this Work; or us'd any more, *vehement Expressions* than were suited to the *Objects* before me. If a just Concern for the great *Doctrines* of the Gospel, draws upon me the *Censures* or *Resentments* of those who are for new modeling our Religion, I hope I shall not be destitute of those Considerations which are necessary to support me under them.

Our Brethren are sufficiently Warm if but the Name of *Liberty* comes in their Way. Nor do I condemn their Zeal for the Thing itself. I am ready to join with them in that Compliment wherein they own themselves 'under the highest Obligations of Gratitude to prevent the most distant Reflection on the generous and useful Defence of it in our own Time.' But I would put in this Claim, that we be allow'd, without Reproach, to temper our Zeal for *Liberty* with some *Calm* and *undisturb'd* Regards for that *Faith* by which we obtain the more glorious *LIBERTY* of the Sons of God; and for the *Supreme DEITY* of our LORD, to whom we are under the highest Obligations of Gratitude and Duty to prevent the most distant Dishonour

VI P R E F A C E.

Dis honour to *his* Name ; or the least Obscuring of the Glory of his *eternal* Power and Godhead ; which we can never own is a Gift to him, who himself laid the Foundations of the Earth, and the Work of whose Hands the Heavens are. We insist upon it as a Branch of our *Christian Liberty*, that they would not blame us, if we cannot, without a Mixture of *Indignation* and *Compassion*, bear the *Impieties* of those *Deceivers* and *Deceived*, who thrust him down from his *Excellency* into the Rank and Order of *inferior* Beings : Even him in whom all Things live and move and have their Being ! Who make the SAVIOUR of the World a made, a dependent GOD ? And degrade a Degree even below that *Absurdity* the ETERNAL SPIRIT in whose Name we are baptiz'd.

WE desire also that they would not take it ill at our Hands, if we think ourselves oblig'd to condemn that *Management* and those *Opinions* which we apprehend have a *natural Tendency* to promote the worst of Errors ; and introduce an horrid *Scepticism* and *Indifferency* concerning the most settled Principles of *Christianity*, and on which the Truth of the *Christian Religion* does depend. For take away those sacred *Verities* that are struck at in our unhappy Times ; yield them up to the prophane Tribe of *Libertines*, and the *New Testament* itself in which they are contain'd, will in
Process

P R E F A C E. vii

Process of Time, be put upon a like Foot with the *Alcoran*.

I would not by any Thing I have said be understood to fix the Charge of *Arianism* on the *Non-Subscribing* Ministers in general. When so many *contradictory* Schemes are maintain'd by Men who profess to believe the *Scripture Doctrine*; it is impossible for us to know *what Persuasion* they are of who will give no *other* publick Evidence of their Faith, than that they *readily own the express Words of Scripture*. We fear that some of them are ready to place the *generally receiv'd* Doctrine of the *Trinity* among the *false Reasonings*, and *groundless Conjectures* of *weak and fallible Men*; or among the *Dreams and Imaginations* of some wild *Enthusiasts*: Others, tho' they may not have the *same* Sense of the *Importance* of that Doctrine which the *Subscribers* have, may yet look upon it as the most *probable Hypothesis*; to such the *Catholick Sense* is a Matter of *Opinion*, but not a necessary *Article of Faith*: And I would hope that many of them do still believe the *Truth and Importance* of of *this Doctrine* as contain'd in the *antient Creeds and Confessions* of the *Reform'd Churches*, as far as relates to the *Sameness* of *Nature or Essence*, and *equal Godhead* of the *Three Divine Persons*; tho' I cannot rationally account for their late Conduct.

T H O S E

THOSE of them who adhere to the ancient Faith, in Opposition to the *New Scheme*, will, 'tis to be hop'd, think of some proper Way to satisfy the World, That when they renounc'd the *Arian Doctrine*, (which not only the Disciples of Dr. Clark, or Mr. Whiston, but even the *Socinians* themselves are ready to do) they intended under these general Terms to renounce all other Doctrines whether *Arian* or *Socinian*, that are inconsistent with this Truth, That these Three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are the one only God ever all blessed forever : And that by any thing they did in Opposition to their Brethren, they had no Design to derogate from the Importance of this great Truth, as the Basis of our common Christianity. 'Tis, I say, to be hop'd they will, for the sake of Truth, and to remove all Diffidence, condescend to explain themselves on this Head ; since it can no longer be palliated, that the Differences between the LONDON Ministers, relate immediately to the Scripture Evidence and Importance of this Doctrine, and not to the Methods of securing it.

AND if all the *Non-Subscribers* will do the same, and likewise declare, that when they throw our Declaration of Faith into the Catalogue of HUMAN DECISIONS, they did not intend it of the Matter of that Declaration, but only of the Order of the Words

P R E F A C E. ix

Words into which it is cast, without Consideration of their *Meaning* ; or, that they did not mean what they tell us they meant, any [doctrinal] *Determinations of Men* in MATTERS of *Salvation*, as *contradistinguish'd* from what is *decided* and *determin'd* by the *Scriptures* themselves ; but that they firmly believe our *Confession* truly *expresses the Sense* of the HOLY GHOST, and contains a *Doctrine of divine Inspiration* : If they will also assure us that when they deny the *Auth'ority* of *Scripture-Consequences* in Matters of Faith necessary to be believ'd, they did not intend any the most distant *Reflection* on the *Importance* of the *Doctrine* of the *Reform'd Churches* as stated in the *Article* and *Answers* to which we set our Hands ; but that they account the contrary to it to be a dangerous Error ; an Error “ of that Nature “ as will not only warrant, but even oblige a “ *Christian Congregation* to withdraw from the “ *Minister, or Ministers* that maintain and “ defend it : ” And if they will farther declare, that by any other Expressions of theirs which seem to us, and cannot but seem to all Mankind, to destroy the *Necessity* of receiving the *Words* of *Scripture* concerning the *Trinity*, or any other part of the *Christian Faith*, in the real and determinate, or in any one certain *Sense* of these Words, they intended nothing like what we may fear : If they will, I say, explain themselves to this Purpose, all Jealousies concerning the
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profess'd

X P R E F A C E

profess'd Agreement will soon be at an End. We shall then conclude that the *Passages* in their *late Writings* which have a contradictory *Sound*, were intended by them to signify nothing, or to be understood in a *Sense* quite *contrary* to the common use of the Words themselves; or, that they were the inconsiderate Thoughts of some warm *Zealot* for *Liberty*, who *saw not* the Ground he was upon; and that the rest of our Brethren consented to a *Publication* without nicely examining Particulars.

B u t unless something equivalent to this is done; I may venture to say that Mens Minds are too much upon the Search to be any longer *satisfy'd* with Words of a *double Entendre*. Nor will mere general Protestations of *Agreement* counterballance real and positive Evidences of the contrary, with those who will see with their own Eyes, or have Eyes to see, that *two* Propositions of immediate *Contradiction* cannot express the *same* Truth.

I N the mean Time such is the present Situation of Affairs among us, and so many Ways are us'd to represent the *Subscribing Ministers* as Persons who are averse to *Peace*, that it was necessary the World should know, it is for their firm Adherence to the *common Faith* that they suffer this Reproach.

I know

I know not that I have any Difference with Mr. *Evans* on the Subject of the *Post-script*; tho' he made it in a manner necessary for me to resume what I had formerly suggested concerning the SONSHIP of CHRIST. I hope the Argument will be improv'd by abler Hands. If the *Arians* are depriv'd of the seeming Advantage which they take from the *Concessions* of the *Orthodox* concerning GENERATION and PROCESSION as applied to the *divine Persons* considered absolutely, their Scheme will appear too contemptible to be regarded by any who have the least Veneration for the *sacred Scriptures*. I find by an *unknown* Adversary, who seems as little to believe the real Creed of the *Apostles*; as the *Assemblies Catechism*, that he does not like this new State (as he calls it) of the Controversy. But I can hardly think he would like me the worse for quitting as he says, "The old
 " *stanch Argument from an eternal Gene-*
 " *ration and Sonship, to an eternal Essence or*
 " *divine Nature,*" (which I neither have absolutely done, nor find myself yet oblig'd to do;) if he did not find an insuperable Difficulty in the Management of that Proof, which in all Reason, the *Arians* are oblig'd to take upon themselves; or to quit all their Arguments drawn from the Topick of Generation or Derivation. Nor am I at present under any Apprehensions, but that,

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what I have attempted may, by the divine Assistance, be so manag'd, as to oblige them either to disclaim the *Authority* of Scripture, or to own that *Jesus Christ* is *one* God with the *Father*, or to run into such open Absurdities and Self-Contradictions as will render their *Scheme* the Contempt of all Mankind, as it is now the Abhorrence of Christians.

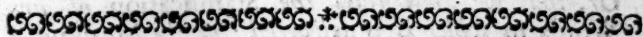
I have this Favour to ask of the Reader, That he would carefully peruse the whole, before he passes his Judgment on what I now submit to his Censure, and humbly leave in the Hand of Providence.



C O N.



CONTENTS.



PART I.

DISSERTATION concerning the
A Authority of **S**CRPTURE-
CONSEQUENCES in *Matters*
of Faith, &c.

CHAP. I.

*Some general Observations relating to this ARGU-
MENT.* Pag. 1

CHAP. II.

*Concerning the State of the Objection, That those who
SEE not Scripture-Consequences, are under no Obliga-
tion from them. That this is a common Plea. Re-
marks on a Passage of this kind, in the Occasional
Paper, Vol. 3. Numb. ii. Suppos'd to be written by a
NON-SUBSCRIBER. Shew'd, that Mr. Evans allows
of this Plea, tho' in Words he disclaims it.* p.18

CHAP. III.

*Several Considerations offer'd in Proof of this Doc-
trine, That plain SCRIPTURE-CONSEQUENCES are
Matters of Revelation; and have the AUTHORITY
of Scripture in determining Articles of Faith.* p.32

CHAP. IV.

*The foregoing Doctrine farther confirm'd, and Ob-
jections answer'd. That some Consequences depend
not on any arbitrary Act of our Minds in collecting
them. That to deny the Authority of Scripture-Con-
sequences in divine Matters, because they are deduc'd
by Ratiocination, is to overturn all Certainty of
Faith*

C O N T E N T S.

Faith among Men. A Digression proving, against a late Writer, that there may be actual Certainty in Matters of Faith; and that this is a Protestant Principle. That Mr. Evans's Objection destroys such Certainty, farther urg'd. That we have as sure a Way to ascertain ourselves of the Truth and Lawfulness of Scripture-Consequences; as we have to ascertain ourselves of any Traditional Revelation: Or, that we understand the Signification of any Words in which it is deliver'd; or the Meaning of any Propositions: Or, that any Translation truly expresses the Sense of the HOLY GHOST. That the new Plea strikes at the grand Principles of NATURAL RELIGION; and renders the Creed of a Deist, as uncertain as the Faith of a Christian. The Comparison from the Case of Assurance not pertinent.

P. 51

A COROLLARY.

SHEWING, That an ASSENT given to plain Scripture-Consequences, is truly a divine Faith; a Faith founded, not on the Authority of fallible Men, but on the Word of GOD.

p. 90

C H A P. V.

The Consistency of this Doctrine with the PERFECTION of Scripture, and the End of a Revelation, vindicated; with brief Remarks on the CHARGE of obscuring the Doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture, exhibited against the SUBSCRIBING Ministers; and the Charge itself, more justly re-torted.

P. 99

C H A P. VI.

Some farther Considerations concerning the binding Force of Scripture-Consequences. That the Obligation to believe them, depends not on the Judgment and Apprehensions of Men themselves, but is of the same Extent, and to be measur'd by the same Rule, with the Obligation to believe the Scripture,

C O N T E N T S.

or to receive them in any determinate Sense. Of the Plea of Sincerity in Mens Searches after Truth. The Supposition of sincere Unbelievers destructive of Christianity, and the Rule of Faith. p. 113

C H A P. VII.

Being in general a RESOLUTION OF THE QUESTION, whether they ought to be deemed credible Professors, or to give a sufficient Pledge of their Christianity, so far as is requisite to entitle to the Offices, and Privileges that belong to Christian Communion, who barely profess to own the express Words of Scripture, but refuse, in other than Scripture-Phrase, to signify what they believe; and disown the Authority of Scripture-Consequences in stating Articles of Faith? What appears to be Mr. Evans's Judgment in this Case stated. The Question itself resolv'd in the Negative. Some contrary Positions, advanc'd by a Committee of the Non-Subscribing Ministers examin'd. Mr. Evans's grand Exception consider'd. Prov'd, That the Scripture makes more necessary to be believed, than it does itself literally declare; and that some Scripture-Consequences are of equal Evidence, and of equal Necessity to be acknowledg'd, with their Premises. This applied to the Doctrine of the ever Blessed TRINITY, as stated in the Declaration of Faith, made by the Subscribing Ministers. Other Objections answer'd. Grounds of Censure: That they may be justly censur'd who absolutely refuse to be determin'd by evident Conclusions from Scripture, in Matters of Faith. This Doctrine consistent with every Man's Right to judge for himself. The whole proving that the late Notions of the Non-Subscribers, are calculated to demolish all Distinction between Heresy and sound Doctrine, as they affect a Right to the Offices and Privileges of Christian Communion. p. 127

T H E

C O N T E N T S.

The Conclusion.

SHEWING, *briefly, what the new Scheme concerning the TRINITY is. Who they are that may be said to propagate it. That the SUBSCRIBERS have not insinuated more frightful Things about it, than it became them to do. This Scheme compar'd with the CATHOLICK SENSE; and the Difference between them fairly stated. Occasion'd by what we are told by a Committee of the NON-SUBSCRIBING Ministers, may very justly be expected from the SUBSCRIBERS.*

P. 179

A POSTSCRIPT relating to the SONSHIP of CHRIST.

SHEWING the UNCERTAINTY of the main Principle on which the ARIANS found their Faith in a DEPENDENT GOD. With a particular Reference to Dr. CLARK's Scheme.

P. 197

PART II.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS on the profess'd Agreement of the Non-Subscribing Ministers, with the Subscribers in their Sentiments concerning the Doctrine of the TRINITY, &c.

CHAP. I.

The Introduction. The Rise of the following Considerations; or, the Claim of Justice insisted on by the Non-Subscribers; Reply, Part. I. P. 6. Shewed that

C O N T E N T S.

that we could not give the ACCOUNT mention'd in the first Branch of their Demand, without clashing with our Brethren, and being thought to intend it as a Reflection on their Conduct. Of the MAIN THING insisted on, or the PROFESS'D AGREEMENT with the SUBSCRIBERS in their Sentiments concerning the DOCTRINE of the TRINITY. A Preliminary Question. An Examination of the Passages themselves in which this Profession is made, or the positive and publick Evidences of such Agreement, in their Concessions and Declaration of Faith. The needless, and seemingly design'd, Ambiguity of them detected. Prov'd, That they are as much an Evidence of Agreement with the Followers of Dr. Clark, as with the Subscribing Ministers.

p. 239

C H A P. II.

The Profess'd Agreement farther considered. Shew'd, That if the Non-Subscribers believe and understand their own express Words, or the Words of their Committee, in the most obvious and most common Sense of these Words, they must, to be consistent with themselves, differ from the Subscribers, in their Sentiments concerning the SCRIPTURE-EVIDENCE, or the TRUTH and CERTAINTY of the Catholick Doctrine of the TRINITY, as stated in the first Article of the CHURCH of ENGLAND, and fifth and sixth Answers of the ASSEMBLIES CATECHISM. Of Human Decisions; and assuming Authority in Matters of Faith.

p. 262

C H A P. III.

The profess'd Agreement consider'd as it relates to Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity. With Remarks on several Passages in the 2d Part of the Reply, relating to human Forms, the Sense of Scripture, and Grounds of Censure. The whole Shewing that the Gentlemen of the Committee have not done justice to themselves, and the rest of our Brethren on that Side, if they are indeed agreed with the Subscribers in their Sentiments concerning the Importance of the commonly receiv'd Doctrine of the

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C O N T E N T S.

the Trinity : Or, judge it necessary to our Christianity, or to a credible Profession, that we should understand the Scriptures relating to that Doctrine, or any other Article of Faith, in their real and determinate, or in any one certain Sense.

C H A P. IV.

An Answer to what is alledged by the Gentlemen of the Committee, in Defence of their eighth Reason for not subscribing, and to support the Charge of Imposition exhibited against the Subscribing Ministers. Their Reflection, under this Head, on the Resolution of the Assembly at Exeter considered. Remarks on some other Passages in their Reply. P. 339



P A R T



PART I.

A

DISSERTATION

Concerning the AUTHORITY of the
Scripture-Consequences, &c.

CHAP. I.

Some General Observations relating to this

ARGUMENT.

REVEREND SIR,



WHATEVER private Conver-
sation has pass'd between us,
on *this*, or any other *Argu-*
ment, it should not by me be
made the Subject of a pub-
lick Dispute. And if in a
Discourse design'd to excite
Christians to a just Sense of their Duty, in a
Time when the most Sacred *Mysteriës* of our

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2 A DISSERTATION concerning

Religion, that ought never to be *controverted* among Believers of the Gospel, are openly denied by some, blasphemed by others, and the Truth of them questioned by many who still profess to own the *Scriptures* as the Rule of their Faith, I observed, *That plain Scripture-Consequences are to be regarded as Matters of Revelation*; or thought fit to *single out* that Passage in a *Title-Page*; it is what I apprehended I might do without giving Offence, or being thought to point to a Conversation which very few knew any thing of, and of which I did not take the least Notice. Besides, it appears from your disowning the *Objection* against the *Authority of Scripture-Consequences*, as *stated* by me, and your allowing of my Reasoning on that *Head*, that nothing I said affected you in particular.

WHAT you are pleased to suggest of *unkind Insinuations and undeserved Reflections* in my *Sermon*, intended against those of my Reverend Fathers and Brethren, who are now, unhappily, distinguished by the Name of *Non-subscribers*, is a general, unsupported Charge; to which I can return no other Answer, than that I know of no *such Reflections*, nor of any in that *Discourse*, but what had been *just*, if the *Subscription* you mention had never been proposed in our *Assembly*. However, Sir, I am far from thinking you had any *End* in the *Letter* you did me the Honour to write to me, than what was becoming a *Scholar*, and a *Divine*. And as “you are sure for
“yourself, you have no Difference with me about the
“Truth of these Propositions,” which many of us
sub-

subscribed as a Declaration of the Soundness of our Faith in the *Sacred TRINITY*; (tho' it seems you dare not be positive about it *) I would persuade myself, it was not a *Dislike* of any thing I might say in *Defence* of these, or to prompt others to a regular contending for the *common Faith*, that moved you to attack a Passage of mine, which if it be not strictly true, the generally received Doctrine of *Three Persons in the Unity of the same Divine Essence, and Godhead*, can have no Place in the Catalogue of *Fundamentals*.

THE right stating of that Regard which ought to be had to Consequences drawn from the express Declarations of Holy Scripture, is certainly a very noble Employment of Time and Thought, and when managed with that Temper you wish for, may do some Service to the Cause of Religion. That this Argument has been (as you intimate) less considered than other Matters of Importance, may be owing to that Deference which Men of all Persuasions have professed to pay to the Sacred Oracles. For it seems absurd that Men should acknowledge the Divine Authority of the Scriptures, and admire their inexhaustible Fullness, as you say good Men have done in all Ages, and yet refuse to be determined by evident Conclusions from Scripture-Principles, in the most necessary Parts of Faith. But how sparingly soever this Matter has been handled among us, it has shewed itself upon the Stage oftner than once, and has been hissed off it too, to the Reproach of those who

* Letter, p. 23.

4 A DISSERTATION concerning

by denying the *Force* of Scripture Consequences in deciding Articles of Religion, have at once overturn'd all the Laws of *Reason* and *Converse*, and destroy'd all *Certainty* of Faith among Men.

THE * *Jesuits*, *Socinians*, and *Arrianabaptists*, who were also called *Libertines*, were, till of late, the last *Fraternities* of Men who set up this juggling Plea. How widely soever these *Sects* differed among themselves, they agreed in asserting *That whatever is not p̄r̄t̄s and syllabically contain'd in Scripture is not to be accounted an Article of Faith*; And *that Consequences, how true soever in themselves, yet being deduced by fallible Men, are no just Ground to build our Faith upon.* The *Socinians* † are very peremptory in their Conclusions, and think it absurd to suppose *That any thing should be necessary to Salvation quod tantum per consequentias ex S. Literis demonstratur, which is only demonstrated by Consequences from Scripture.* They determine absolutely, *That every Thing necessary must altogether, even to a Letter (ad literam) be written in the sacred Volumes.* So that with them the most indubitable and irrefragable *Consequences* are of no Authority in Points of Faith. Doubtless these Men were strenuous Assertors of the *Perfection of Scripture!* It was their

* *Vid. Veron in Methodi sui cap. 3. & M. Arnoux, apud Molin. in dypteo Fidei, Art. 5. Bail. Traët. 1. Quest. 9. where he has these Words, ubinam perspicue scriptum est nomen illud, trium personarum in Trinitate, & trium proprietatum — quomodo determinatum est in sacris conciliis? &c.*

† *Vid. Smalc. contra Schopper. pag. 1. & contra oration. Vogelii pag. 6. contra Graver. de S. Script. pag. 4. apud Calovium, Socinism. profligat. p. 70. Similiter Ostorod. Crell. Socin. tho' this last contradicts himself.*

SCRIPTURE-CONSEQUENCES. 5

pious Regard to the *Sufficiency* of holy Writ that made them deny all *Certainty* of any *Deductions* from it!

WHEN this Method was first brought into France, by some *Doctōrs* of the Church of *Rome*, to bring a Disgrace upon the *Confessions* of the *Reformed Churches*, which could not be prov'd by *formal Passages*, without the Help of just and lawful *Consequences* from *Scripture*; the learned *Daille* * exposed the Fallacy of it, (as did *Spanhemius* and others in *Holland* and *Germany*) and at the same time shewed it was the constant *Guise* of the most pestilent *Heresies* that infested the Christian Church; especially the *Arian*, *Macedonian* and *Eutychian*. They all with one Consent cried out, *These things are not read; bring us formal Words of Scripture; Truth is not to be gathered by Argument, or drawing of Consequences, but is prov'd by simple Testimonies.* The *Arians* demanded a *Text* in which the *Son* is in so many Words said to be of the *same Substance* or *Essence* with the *Father*. The *Macedonians* ask'd *Where is it written that the Holy Ghost is GOD?* and the *Eutychians*, *In what Scripture are the two Natures of Christ to be read?* These Men, at the same time that they shun'd a Tryal by *Scripture-Evidence*, or the collective Sense of those *Scriptures* which related to the Thing in question, and refus'd to admit of any *Consequences* drawn from two or more Places put together, yet boasted of the Respect

* *Joan. Daillei de Fidei ex Scripturis demonstratione, Adversus nequam quorundam latinorum methodum disputatio.*

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6 A DISSERTATION concerning

they pay'd to the Holy Scriptures ; and had this Piece of *Sophistry* always in their Mouths, *We will readily submit to whatever is written there.* As if God had given us a Revelation of simple *Words* or *Ideas* which we can neither connect together, nor deduce any thing from. How exactly this *Arian* Plea agrees with what is now offered to be imposed on the World by the *Non-subscribers*, you need not be inform'd.

BUT the *Orthodox* Fathers proved that these Men abused the Scriptures. That they reduc'd them to a Heap of insignificant *Words* or *Sounds*. That being destitute of the *Spirit* they serv'd the *Letter* only. That in Imitation of *Jewish Wisdom*, or rather Folly, they forsook *Things* and followed *Syllables*. And complain'd that their *Method* reduc'd human Nature itself to a State of Brutality. They press'd upon the *Hereticks*, that the *Sense* of Scripture, and not the *Sound* of Words was the Matter of their Faith. And that they ought to believe such Things as were justly gathered from Scripture, tho' not *literally* express'd. They told them, *that some Things seem'd to be said in Scripture, that truly are not, as when sleeping, waking, moving from Place to Place, are applied to God ; and, that other Things were plainly revealed there, tho' not formally written, as that God was without Beginning, Impassible, and the like.* And they every where insisted on it, that the Scriptures were not only to be *heard with our Ears, but to be understood with our Minds.*

If any would more fully know what was the
Sense

SCRIPTURE-CONSEQUENCES 7

Sense of the *Orthodox* Fathers concerning this *Artifice* of appealing to *express Words* of Scripture only, he will find it at large in two of *Theodoret's* Discourses, publish'd in the Works of *Athanasius*, and added by *Mr. Daille*, both in *Greek* and *Latin*, as an *Appendix* to his Book. The first is against those who are for receiving the Expressions, or Sounds [*ταῖς ᾠραῖς*] of Scripture, without considering what is signified by them. The other is much to the same Purpose, but entitled. Against those who are for believing simply what is said, and mind not what is convenient, or inconvenient.

In the former he sharply inveighs against his Adversaries for subverting all Things Humane, and divesting Mankind of what was rational in them. He complains that they were for using the Words of Scripture, without any Exercise of their Understanding, or attending to the pious Scope or End for which they were written. That by their Method they rendered the Writings of the Prophets and Apostles unprofitable, and annull'd the Efficacy of them, whilst they heard with their Ears, but did not understand with their Heart, nor consider the CONSEQUENCE of what was said. Thereby bringing upon themselves the Curse denounced by the Prophet, *Hear ye indeed, but understand not*. He opposes to them the Authority of *St. Paul*, who was for trying all Things, and holding fast what is Good; which could not be done without Reason and Judgment, and having the Senses exercis'd to discern both good and evil. He upbraids them with those *clean Beasts* who were for chewing

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8 A DISSERTATION concerning

the Cud. He puts them in mind of the Instruction of *Wisdom*, That when call'd to a *Superior Table*, we should diligently ponder what is set before us; whereas they were for doing nothing analogous to this with their *spiritual Food*; but were for catching at *Words* divested of their *Sense* and *Meaning*, without consideration of what was the *Mind of God* in them, what was available to us to know, what the *Truth imported*, what answered the *Perfection* of the divine Law, or was agreeable to the rational Nature: All which, with the *property of Faith*, were to be apprehended by pious *Meditations*, and not by receiving certain Sounds; which he exemplifies in the *Exposition* of that Text, *The Word was made Flesh.*

IN the *second Discourse* he pursues the like Argument, but more largely confutes the Method of insisting *simply* on what is spoken, and not regarding the Analogy of Faith, to find out what is *convenient* or *inconvenient*. He shews that at this rate it is impossible to reconcile those Places that seem *contradictory*. He observes that if we take these Words, *My Father is greater than I*, simply, and not consider that they are to be understood *Oeconomically*, we shall presumptuously conclude that the *Son* is in all Respects *Inferior* to the *Father*; contrary to his own Words elsewhere, *I and my Father are one*, and to innumerable other Places that plainly shew an *Equality*, and that *equal Honour* is due unto them. He gives divers other Instances relating to the *Arrian Controversy*. And pronounces that the
Method

SCRIPTURE-CONSEQUENCES

Method he was opposing was an Inlet to all those execrable Doctrines, which had been at any Time invented by the Devil. That whereas the *Heretics* of former Times struck only at some Truths, and had their particular Errors, this was a Complication of all; renewed, and exceeded all the Errors that went before it. And it were easy to shew, that in this he spoke the Sense of all the *Orthodox Fathers*. But I refer the Reader to Mr. *Daille* himself for a more distinct Account of this Matter *

FROM what hath been observed you will perceive, that those among us, who stand so much upon *Words* and *Phrases*, and will not allow of just *Consequences* from Scripture in stating Articles of Faith, have this Satisfaction, that they are so far agreed with the *Jesuits*, make use of their Weapons, and tread in the Steps of those who have been the most famous *Corrupters* of the *Evangelical Faith*, and who have been censured as such by the *Catholick Church*. And tho' *Principles* are not to be tried by *Authorities* only, yet it is no small Prejudice against *This*, that the greatest *Hereticks* have always shrouded themselves

* I would also recommend to the *English Reader*, a Discourse of Bishop *Burton's*, annexed to A Relation of a Conference held by him and Bishop *Stillingsfleet*, with some Gentlemen of the Church of *Rome* about Religion. Upon a cursory View of this Piece, which fell accidentally into my Hands after I had finished my Book, I found the Bishop gave much the same Account of the Rise and Management of this Plea, and of the Sentiments of the *Fathers* concerning it, that I had met with in *Daille*. It is remarkable, that in this Dispute the *Jesuits* demanded express Words of Scripture for every thing.

under it, and that it has been universally re-
jected and condemned by the *Orthodox*.

For this Reason I could not but be con-
cerned to think, "*That the late unhappy Diffe-*
"*rences among the Dissenting Ministers, should, **
"*as you say, center in this single Point.*" I own
your Observation is just. And having your
Authority for it, I have entitled the *Argument*
between us, *Cardo Controversiæ*. It is *That* also
on which the main *Stress* of the Controversy be-
tween us and the *New-Methodists*, or *Modern*
Arians, greatly depends. Take away the Autho-
rity of plain *Scripture-Consequences* in stating and
determining Articles of Faith, and I see not how
they ought to be censured who deny *That these*
Three, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are the One
God, &c. For tho' this *Doctrine* be clearly re-
vealed in *Scripture*, and has been regarded by
all *Catholic Christians*, not as a *humane Decision*,
but as a Matter of *pure Revelation*, yet still it is
a *Consequence* from *Scripture*, tho' a very near
and necessary One. And if we are not obliged
to believe *That these Three are the One God*, we
can never be obliged to believe that the *Son* and
Spirit are *G O D* in the *strict* and *common* Sense
of that *Word*, seeing it is demonstrable from
Reason and *Scripture* there is but *ONE GOD*.
I must, therefore, acknowledge with you †, that
"*I scarce know an Argument which appears to me*
"*to be of greater Importance in Religion ;*" since if

* Letter, p. 5.

† Ibid. p. 4.

we recede from this Principle, *That plain Scripture-Consequences are to be regarded as Matters of Revelation*, we can neither defend the *Orthodox Faith*, nor fasten any just *Censure* on the *Errors* that are contrary to it.

YOU begin your Remarks with observing, "That if our *Regard* to *Scripture-Consequences* should be sunk too low, it might reflect on the *inexhaustible Fulness* of the *Scriptures*, so justly celebrated and admired by good Men in all Ages; it would greatly abate and straiten the *Usefulness* of a *Gospel-Ministry*, and lay a greater *Restraint* on the *Use* of *Reason* in *Matters* of *Religion* than will be allowed on any Hand *." All this is strictly true. But pray, Sir, when is this *Regard* sunk too low? Is there any *Medium* between regarding them as *Matters* of *Revelation*, and not regarding them as such? Are not these *Terms* of immediate *Contradiction*? Can they be sunk lower than by denying they are to be regarded as *Matters* of *Divine Revelation*? And if they are such, and so to be esteemed, it will follow, by the justest *Consequence* in the *World*, that they have *Authority* to determine our *Judgment*, and bind our *Consciences* in *Things* of the greatest *Necessity* to be believed and done by *Christians*, if a *Divine Revelation* has such *Authority*.

HENCE I am at a Loss how to apply what you add in the following Words: "On the other Side Care must be taken, that such a Stress be not

* Letter, p. 4.

" laid upon Scripture-Consequences, as will reflect up-
 " on the perfection of the Scriptures themselves, or
 " their plainness and sufficiency to direct those of the
 " meanest Capacities in things necessary to Salvation;
 " or that shall countenance the Impositions of fallible
 " Men, and place their Deductions from Scripture
 " upon a Level with the sacred Oracles themselves;
 " or, which would destroy or render useless that Right
 " of private Judgment, that belongs to every Man,
 " to every Christian, and every Minister; or, that
 " would unnecessarily divide the Disciples of Christ
 " in Affection or Communion".

I readily own, that an undue Stress may be
 laid on the very Words of the sacred Text. As
 when *Allegories* and other high *Figures* of Speech
 are taken *literally* (as in the Case of *Transubstan-*
tation) without any Regard to their figurative
 Import: Or when Men earnestly contend for
 the *Letter* of Scripture, but are indifferent as to
 any certain *Sense* or *Meaning* it has; which looks
 like making a *Charm* of the Words, whilst the
Doctrines or *Things* signify'd by them are over-
 look'd. You know the *Antropomorphites* (and some
Socinians have been so sottish) contend that God
 has a *Body**, *Parts*, and *Passions* as Men have,
 because

* There is a very odd Passage tending this Way in Sir Isaac
 Newton's *Philosoph. Nat. Princip. Mathematic.* Edit. ult. p. 482. Where
 we have this Definition of the DEITY, Deitas est Dominatio Dei,
 non in CORPUS PROPRIUM, sed in servos. The Deity is the
 Dominion of God, not over HIS OWN BODY, but over Servants.
 It follows, — Dominatio Entis spiritualis Deum constituit, vera, vo-
 rum; summa, summum; ficta, fictum. It is the Dominion of a spiritual

Being

because the *Scriptures* speak of him sometimes under such Images. Nor is it easy to detect or confute that Notion from Scripture, tho' it be manifestly repugnant to all the *Ideas* of infinite

Being that constitutes a God: true Dominion, a true God; supreme Dominion, the supreme God, false Diminion, a false God. Whether this was originally Sir *Isaac's* own, or was added (with Allowance) by another Hand that had the Correction of this Edition of his Works (for the Passage is not in the first) I will not determine: It seems design'd to give Countenance to Dr. *Clark's* Scheme. That Gentleman makes the Word *GOD* to be only a relative Term. He tells us, it is never intended to signify the *Divine Nature*, or the abstract metaphysical Attributes of *GOD*, but only his Attributes relative to us, as his Dominion, Authority, &c. It is one of his chief Positions, That the *Sap* is styled God, not upon the Account of his Substance or Essence, how divine soever, but because of his Authority over us. And assigns this as the Reason why the *HOLY GHOST* is never expressly styled *GOD*, because, whatever be his metaphysical Substance, he is no where represented as exercising Dominion. *Script. Doct. Part. 2 §. 25. pag. 296.* If all this be true, the *HOLY GHOST* is not God at all; no, not so much a *GOD* as a rightful Master or Sovereign who has Dominion (I will not say over his own Body, but) over his own Servants. However this well agrees with Sir *Isaac's* (or some other Man's) Mathematicks in the Place refer'd to. Which begins thus, *Deus est vox relativa, et ad servos refertur.* God is a relative Term, and refers to Servants. And again, *Ens utcumque Perfectum sine Dominio, non est Dominus Deus.* A Being how perfect soever without Dominion is not Lord God. Hopeful Theories, that suppose the Perfections of the *Divine Nature*, and its *Essential Attributes*, may be separated from the supreme *Divine Dominion* over all! But tho' we may guess what Purpose this was intended to serve, we are still at a Loss what to make of *GOD'S PROPER BODY*. The Expression is exceeding gross and unphilosophical, not to say Atheistical. And I wonder it should come in here, it being enough to spoil the Reputation that the Authority even of so great a Man could give to the Distinction between a *true GOD*, and the *supreme GOD*. But the most profound Philosophers are not always the fittest Men in the World to explain divine Things: And the greatest Mathematicians may be sometimes out in their Metaphysics.

Perfection, without using other than Scripture-Terms, and arguing *consequentially* from the Nature and Attributes of God. And as an *undue Stress* may be laid on Scripture-words, or Sounds, and *these* be even opposed to the Mind and Will of God *in them*; so Scripture-Consequences may be perverted; or carried *too far* in Things of an inferior Nature. But does it therefore follow that they have not the Authority of a Divine Revelation? Then the express Words of Scripture which are liable to the like Abuse, must lose their Authority also. If evident Conclusions from Scripture, are indeed Scripture-Revelations, which you seem sometimes willing to allow; it can never derogate from the Perfection of the sacred Oracles to pay that Regard to them, which a Divine Revelation challenges from reasonable Creatures. The *Respect* we claim to them is upon this Account, that they are *virtually* contain'd in, and a *part* of the Scriptures themselves. Upon this Principle, the more *stress* we lay upon them, the more we must of Necessity regard the Propositions that *imply* them. For it would argue a very odd Turn of Mind, for a Man to profess a Reverence for a *consequential Truth*, and at the same Time diminish ought from those very Declarations whence it is inferred. Nor can any thing we plead for, obscure the Plainness and Sufficiency of a Divine Revelation, &c. Since the more plain the Scriptures are, the more obvious are the Conclusions that result from them; and those Scriptures must be very *obscure*, from which nothing certain can be deduc'd.

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How far *Doctrines* demonstrated by manifest and necessary Consequences of plain Scriptural Propositions may be deem'd *Fundamental*; and the *Profession* of them made necessary to *Christian Communion*, without countenancing the *Impositions* of fallible Men, shall, God willing, be considered in its proper Place. As for placing their *Deductions* upon a Level with the Sacred Oracles, I need only observe here, that if these Deductions are just and necessary, the *Fallibility* of those who collect them can never lessen their *Force*, or render them less *Sacred* in themselves, than if gathered by Persons exempt from Error: But if they are false Deductions, they are not truly *Scripture-Consequences*, and so have no Place in this Argument. That *Right of private Judgment* which belongs to every Man, is not invaded by any Stress laid upon *Scripture-Consequences*, whilst every Man is left to the free Use of his own Faculties, and allowed to act, in Matters of Religion, according to his *Sense* of Things. My regarding a *Consequence* as a necessary Part of Faith, can never render useless the Reason of another Man, or deprive him of his *Right of private Judgment*, unless I seek to impose my *Sense* upon him by any injurious Methods. And whatever *Divisions in Affection or Communion* have hitherto happened among Christians; these have been owing to some other Causes, and not to any Over-regard Men have had to manifest and necessary Consequences from Scripture.

HAD you plainly told us what that particular Stress is, which, if laid upon *Scripture-Consequences*,

ees, would be attended with your Catalogue of Mischiefs; it might help to elucidate the Argument. But after a careful Perusal of what you have offered, as I know not precisely what you would be at, in stating the Regard due to *Scripture-Consequences*; so I am still to seek for a *Medium* between sinking them *too low*, and regarding them as *Matters of Revelation*, which we can never consistently do, if we *distinguish* their *Authority* from that of Scripture. In the Close of your Letter you are pleased to apply what you had said in general on this Subject, to the Doctrine of the TRINITY. So that by the *Extreme* which you guard against, you may, perhaps, intend the putting *such* a Stress on the *generally received Doctrine* (stated in the *first Article* of the Church of England, and the *fifth and sixth Answers* of the Assembly's Catechism) as to make the Profession of it a *Term* of Communion. We shall have Occasion afterwards to discuss this Point. I would now only offer this Remark, That upon Supposition that Doctrine were only a *humane Decision* (which I am far from granting) the making it a *Term* of Communion could never be proved an *Imposition*, or an Invasion of that *Right of private Judgment* which belongs to every Man, unless those who made it *such* did at the same Time oblige others by any forcible Methods, by any temporal Penalties, or Forfeitures, to embrace their Communion; or did by the like Means hinder others from openly professing and acting according to their inward Persuasions in Matters purely of a religious

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Nature. He who is for an *unlimited Toleration* may indeed be an *Heretick*, an *Infidel*, or an *Atheist*, but he can never be an *Imposer* in the criminal Sense of that Word. We do not reckon those *Antipadobaptists*, *IMPOSERS*, (whatever other *Censure* they may deserve) who refuse the Pledge of Communion to such as will not be *rebaptized*, or *baptized* in their Way; because, tho' they insist on a Term of Communion, which we apprehend, is neither found in, nor founded on Scripture, as a Qualification for Church-Membership, yet they force none into their *Societies*, nor are for inflicting temporal *Penalties* on those who differ from them. But if any Person should obtrude himself on their *Assemblies*, and pretend to all *Spiritual Offices*, and Privileges among them; and at the same Time refuse to comply with what they held *necessary*, I doubt not but even the *pacifick Advisers* among them, would complain of this as an Invasion of their *Liberty*, and fasten the Charge of *Imposition* on the *Intruder*.





C H A P. II.

Concerning the State of the Objection, That those who SEE not Scripture-Consequences, are under no Obligation from them. That this is a common Plea. Remarks on a Passage of this Kind, in the Occasional Paper, Vol. 3. Numb. xi. supposed to be written by a NON-SUBSCRIBER. Shewed, that Mr. Evans allows of this Plea, tho' in Words he disclaims it.

I HAVE nothing to object against your Concessions, unless it be, that I think they are *defective*, and scarce *sufficient* to secure the *Regard* due to Scripture-Consequences. And before I offer you my Thoughts on your Head of *Distinctions*, under which you “*shew the Difference which you conceive ought to be made between them, and the plain and express Declarations of Scripture*”; I shall, *first*, consider what you say in reference to *what I took for granted was a common Objection* against the *Authority* and binding Force of such Propositions as are prov'd only by *Consequences* from Scripture. This I am concern'd to take notice of, as I would not be thought to *forge* an *Objection* against any Position advanc'd by my self, on purpose to make a shew of contending for the Truth against real *Adversaries*. Besides, the setting this Matter in

SCRIPTURE-CONSEQUENCES. 19

a true Light, will render the remaining Part of the Argument more clear and easy to the Mind of the Reader.

My Assertion was * That manifest and necessary Consequences of plain scriptural Propositions, are as much a divine Revelation, and so to be regarded, as the Principles from which they naturally and necessarily flow. This coming in occasionally only, as I was vindicating the Perfection of Scripture, and removing a common Prejudice that arises from its being liable to be perverted by ignorant or designing Men, (of which I gave some Instances among the Papists, who allege the Words of Scripture, to colour the most intollerable Cruelties and Oppressions, as well as to impose upon the World the Absurdity of *Transubstantiation*) I could not naturally pursue it in the Body of the Discourse; but referr'd the Reader to a *Marginal Note*; where I observ'd that it was commonly objected, That Scripture-Consequences, how natural and necessary soever they are suppos'd to be, are Matters of Revelation, only to those who see them; but that others who see them not, are under no Obligation as to these Consequences. I verily thought this was no imaginary Plea, but was commonly urg'd by those who except against the Authority of Consequences in deciding Matters of Religion. And therefore I endeavour'd to detect the Fallacy of it, by reducing it to an Absurdity; a Way of reasoning allowed of by Logicians as conclusive.

* Advice to Christians, to contend for the Truth, p. 28.

WHAT I offer'd to this Purpose, it seems carried its own Evidence with it, since *you* have not so much as attempted to disprove any Thing I said in Answer to the Objection *thus stated*. So that if it was *rightly stated* by me, I must be allowed by *you* to have refuted it. But it seems you would never state the Objection as I did, without an Addition. Here I must transcribe a whole Paragraph, that the Reader may have the Satisfaction of being inform'd by your self, *how* you would state the Objection.

You begin with an Admonition, † ‘I would farther add for the Caution of all, That those who have sufficient Opportunities and Means to attain the Knowledge of consequential Truths, cannot be excus'd before God, for continuing ignorant of them; if he knows that this is owing to their own wicked Neglect, or obstinate Rejection of the Light’. Then it follows, ‘So that you may plainly see, I should never state the Objection to your Assertion as you do, that others who see not Scripture-Consequences, are under no Obligation from them’. You add, ‘I never met with any who so stated it, but either they expressly allowed this Addition, or laid down in the Connexion of their Discourse what imply'd it’. I hope, Sir, to give you entire Satisfaction in this Matter, by making you sensible, That others have stated the Objection as I did, That you yourself have done it; and that your Addition signifies nothing.

† Letter, p. 10.

I. You never met with any who so stated the Objection. What then? Does it therefore follow that I am the only Person who so stated it? It is generally thought that you have often met with the Committee of the Non-subscribing Ministers. In their REPLY, Part. 2. Pag. 17. 18. They resolve the Obligation we are under to receive the Scriptures themselves in their Real and determinate Sense, merely into our Act of discerning that Sense, or the Grounds of it. And they look upon it as an Absurdity to suppose, that others should be oblig'd to believe our determinate Sense (upon Supposition we were in the right) whether they see our Grounds or no. But of this more fully in another place.

I presume you have seen the Occasional Paper, VOL. 3. NUMB. II. Tho' I have no Suspicion it is yours. In Pag. 21. That Author proceeds thus; 'If it shall notwithstanding be said, That what may be prov'd from Scripture, by a just and lawful Consequence, is to be look'd upon as decided and determin'd by the Scriptures themselves. I answer briefly; It certainly is so to all who See such Consequences to be just and lawful; it is so to all Men who apprehend such Proof; but this arises not from the nature of the Consequence, but the Judgment and Conscience of the Person who Perceives it to be a true Consequence: For all Consequences and Decisions, in themselves considered, are no other than human Reasonings, in which there may be Sophistry as well as right Reasoning: And therefore, there may be Uncertainty and Error, as well as Security and

'and Truth'. And a little after; 'These Consequences must then be always distinguish'd from the Authority of the Holy Scriptures themselves: And how useful soever they may be for Instruction or Persuasion, THEY NEVER CAN HAVE AUTHORITY TO DETERMINE MENS FAITH.'

THE Reader will excuse me from running a Parallel between what is here asserted, and the Objection stated by me. And you'll pardon me, Sir, If having met my Man, I exchange a few Words with him; which shall not hinder my waiting on you, by and by, with all the Frankness of a Friend. It would be an Injury to this learned Author, not to acknowledge an Obligation he has laid the World under (especially such as are given to *Fanaticism* and *Enthusiasm*) by a very surprizing Discovery. For if what he confidently affirms be true, it will follow by a very easy Consequence, that a particular Faculty of seeing or apprehending certain Conclusions, is of itself sufficient to give them the Stamp of a divine Authority, without any regard to the Nature of those Inferences, or their Connexion with Scripture. It is here acknowledg'd that just and lawful Consequences, are of equal Authority with the Scriptures themselves, to all who see such Consequences to be just and lawful: Otherwise, a Point decided by them ought never to be look'd upon as determin'd by the Scriptures. Whence then do these Consequences derive an equal Authority with the Scriptures, to determine and conclude those who see them to be just and lawful? Our Author answers, This arises not from the Nature of the Consequence, but the

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Judgment and Conscience of the Person who perceives it to be a true Consequence. Whence it unavoidably follows, That a Man's own private *Judgment* fixes a divine Authority on some Deductions without any Respect had to their own Nature; that is, whether in themselves they are just or not. There is no possible Way of evading this, upon our Author's Scheme, but by denying the divine Authority of the Scriptures. If what is prov'd from Scripture by a just and lawful Consequence, is to be look'd upon as decided and determin'd by the Scriptures themselves, by all who see such Consequences to be just and lawful (as this Gentleman precisely affirms, tho' he egregiously contradicts himself) then such Consequences must be of equal Authority with the Scriptures, to those who see them as aforesaid: This, he tells us, arises not from their own Nature, but the *Judgment* of such as apprehend them to be just and lawful. Either, therefore, the Authority of the Scripture is not Divine, or a Man's own private *Apprehension* fixes a Divine Authority on some Consequences, irrespectively and independently on what they are in themselves.

AND now I appeal to all Mankind, whether this be not to lay an unconscionable Stress, not on Scripture-Consequences, but on a Man's own *Eye-sight*? And whether, if this Reasoning will hold, all the Authority of the Scripture itself, relative to us, is not to be resolv'd into our *Apprehensions* of it? For if the Authority of just and lawful Consequences from Scripture, arises, not from any thing in themselves, but from our *Judgment* concerning them;

them; by Parity of Reason, the Authority of Scripture, with Respect to us, arises *not* from what *it is* in itself, but from what *we take it to be*. So that Things must come to this at last, That all the *Authority* of the inspir'd Writings over every *Man*, that is, Their Power to *command*, and require *Obedience* in the Name of God, is founded not on their *divine Original*, not upon the *Nature* and Evidence of what they reveal, but upon the *Judgment* which every *Man* forms of them. To him who *sees* they are a *divine Revelation*, they are such. But this arises not from their intrinsick Goodness, or positive Proofs, but from the *Judgment and Conscience of the Person who perceives*, who apprehends such *Proof* of their *divine Original*. And whether this has not a direct tendency to *Deism* and Irreligion, he is *blind* who *sees* not.

THE Truth is, The *Authority* of the Scriptures arises solely from their *divine Original*; or their being the *Word of God*, and therefore, spirited with all his *Authority* over reasonable Creatures. This they are whether Men *discern* it or not. Their Power to command our Faith and Obedience, depends no more on the *Judgment* we form concerning them, than on the *Decrees of Popes*. If Men *see not* the *Authority* of God in them, it is at their Peril. They afford all the *Evidences of Divinity*, which it became the only wise God to give to intelligent Beings: And the *Unbeliever* is condemn'd, whatever be his *Apprehensions* of those Evidences. Thus it is also, as to manifest and necessary Consequences of plain Scriptural Propositions. They oblige the Conscience,

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not for this Reason only, because a Man sees them, (which is a *blind* Reason: For then a Man's own *Judgment* must be the Standard of every Truth he is *oblig'd* to believe; which, what is it, but to make a Man's *Judgment*, his *GOD*?) But because they are *true*, and Truths spirited with the *same Authority* with those Principles from which they *naturally* and *necessary* flow; as I shall endeavour to make appear in the Sequel of this *Dissertation*.

BUT whatever regard is due to *Scripture-Consequences*, this Gentleman's *Concessions* are not much to be relied on. We have heard him confess, That what may be prov'd by a just and lawful Consequence from Scripture, is to be look'd upon as decided and determined by the Scriptures themselves, by all who SEE such Consequences to be just and lawful. But we must not take him at his Word. For in the same Series of Discourse, he says, That these Consequences must be ALWAYS DISTINGUISHED from the Authority of the Holy Scriptures themselves: That how useful soever they may be for Instruction or Persuasion, they never can have Authority to determine Mens Faith. And that in themselves considered, they are no other than human Reasonings in which there may be Sophistry, and Error as well as Truth. Alas! If this be the Case with Scripture-Consequences, with all such Consequences, how comes it to pass, That what may be proved by a just and lawful Consequence from Scripture, ought certainly to be look'd upon as decided and determin'd by the Scriptures themselves, by all who see such Consequences to be just and

lawful? Can it be the Duty of any, let their Sight be ever so penetrating, to look upon *that* as decided and determin'd by the *Scriptures themselves*, which is prov'd only by a Medium that must be *always distinguish'd* from the Authority of Scripture? Which depends on *Consequences that never can have Authority to determine Men's Faith?* And in which there may be *Uncertainty and Error*, as well as *Security and Truth?* Are not these Positions contradictory? If not, neither *Plato himself*, who this Author says, was suppos'd on a Time to know more of the *Doctrine of the Trinity* than the very *Scriptures*, nor any of those *Gentlemen skill'd in Polemical Tricks*, whose *Metaphysical Fastnesses* he is so apprehensive of, and to whose *Reasonings* he seems to have a mortal Aversion, nor even this *Anti-Subscriber*, can tell what a Contradiction is.

I would farther observe, That upon this *Gentleman's Principles*, the *Doctrine of a future State* could not be a *Matter of Faith* to the Church of *Israel* for some Ages; at least during that Period in which they had only the Writings of *Moses*, their *Lawgiver*. He is peremptory in asserting that *Scripture-Consequences*, *never can have Authority to determine Mens Faith*; and he is not able to prove a *Resurrection*, nor the Certainty of an eternal State of *Happiness*, or *Misery* after this Life, from the Writings of the *first Pen-Man of Scripture*, without admitting the Authority of just and lawful *Consequences*. And what a State of *Darkness* and *Horror* must the sincere *Worshippers of God* be in, if for so long a Time (perhaps for

for many Ages) they were destitute of a *divine Authority* whereon to ground their *Faith* of a *Resurrection*, and *World to come*?

I hope, *Sir*, you are now convinc'd, I had good Reason for *stating* the *Objection* against the Authority of *Scripture-Consequences*, as laid down in my *Sermon*, *Marg. Pag. 29*. Nor will you, I suppose, henceforth say, *That you never met with any who so stated it*. And as it appears the *Objection* was not an *Invention* of *Mine*, never thought of by any other; I flatter myself, what I have said in *Opposition* to it, is, in the main, according to your *Mind*, since you have said nothing to invalidate my *Arguments*; and you freely allow with me, *Pag. 16* of your *Letter*, *That the Question is not, what a Man sees, or does not see, but what he ought to see, &c.*

II. But you insist upon it, oftner than once, that I may plainly see you would not have so form'd the *Objection*. Were this true, all that would follow is, that my *Arguments* did not concern you at all, nor militate against any *Principle* you maintain'd. But to be free with you, *Sir*, I think I plainly see, that you have stated the *Objection* to my *Affertion* as I did. I refer not now to any private *Conversation*, the *Circumstances* of which I may have forgot, but to your *Letter* before me. Allow me here, to put you in mind of what you have offer'd for my *Conviction*, *Pag. 17*.

' 18. *How manifest soever the Connexion of such Consequences with the Words of Scripture is to us, that conveys no Light at all to them; [who see not these*

[Consequences] and it is certain they must govern themselves by their own, and will be judged by that Measure, and not by ours in the great Day. If they could not see the same Conclusions from Scripture as we do, how could that be binding to them? I would observe to the Reader, that I have done you justice, in presenting him with your own Words, and in their proper Order, lest he should impute any Obscurity or Impropriety he may observe in them, to an unfair Transcript. However, this is obvious enough, that here you *put the Matter upon Mens seeing, or not seeing only*.

And as far as I am capable of understanding what you object. (Pag. 12.) against the Significance of the Terms *manifest* and *necessary* in this Controversy, you appear to me to lay the whole stress upon our different *Apprehensions* of Things. There you say, That *the Sense of these Expressions, when applied to any particular Consequence, must come to this at last, that such a Consequence is manifest to you or me; that it is necessary in our Judgment. And when we consider that the same Consequence has not appeared natural or necessary to others, who were as wise and good as we can pretend to be; all that can follow is, that such Consequences that carry so great Evidence to us, must be as firmly believed by us as the Principles they are derived from: Not that they are to be esteem'd as strictly a part of Revelation to Christians in general, as the Words of Scripture.* What is this, Sir, but to lay the Obligation to be determin'd by *manifest* and *necessary* Consequences from Scripture, solely upon the *Judgment* of the Person who happily sees these

these *Qualifications*, without any regard to what they are in *themselves*? For at the top of this Paragraph, you say, that these Adjectives, *manifest* and *necessary*, give no weight to my Proposition, because what appears *manifest* and *necessary* to you or me, may not do so to others. And you add afterwards, 'If they could not see the same Conclusions from Scripture as we do, how could that be binding to them?' If in any other Place, you seem to contradict this; I am not answerable for such Turns of Thought.

III. YOUR additional Allowance alters not the state of the Objection. Let us take it as it lies in Pag. 16. Your words are, 'It appears to me, that Consequences from Scripture are obligatory only upon those, who either actually see the Connexion of them with Scripture-Declarations, or have had sufficient Means to discover that Connexion, unless they were wickedly negligent or obstinate: And that of this last, God alone is a competent Judge, and not one Man concerning another'. I shall presently shew that this is not to the Purpose. But in the first place, I would willingly know, whether it is possible, a Man may see the Connexion of Things, who has not had sufficient Means to discern the Things themselves, and the Dependence of one Thing upon another? If not, where is the Emphasis of this Addition, as you call it? Does not the Obligation that lies on reasonable Creatures to be determin'd by the Scriptures, the express Words of Scripture, necessarily imply that they have had sufficient Means to convince them of their divine Authority? And did not I bring this Parallel to

shew

shew the Weakness of the Objection against the Regard due to Scripture-Consequences? You add, *Unless they were wickedly negligent, or obstinate.* And so they must be, who have had sufficient Means, as above, and have not duly attended to them. But of this, you say, *God alone is a competent Judge.* He is so, the only Judge of *Mens Hearts*; but we may and must judge of *Things and Propositions.* And it is no Invasion of God's Prerogative, if we judge thus, That *Mens Ignorance* of those divine Matters, they had Means and Opportunities of knowing, and which it was their Duty to know, can be owing to no other Cause, than wilful Neglect or Obstinacy.

BUT that which shews that your Sense of extending the Obligation of Scripture-Consequences to such as have sufficient Means of Discovery, alters not the State of the Case; is, that you expressly discharge from all Obligation those, who after what you call, *long and careful Enquiries*, see not those Consequences that are in question, how manifest or necessary soever they may appear to others to be. Thus you express yourself, Page 18. 'If they (Men who profess to have made long and careful Enquiries) could not see the same Conclusions from Scripture as we do, how could that be binding to them?' And in the same Page; 'That a Man is not obliged to receive those Consequences from Scripture, which tho' they appear plain and necessary to another, yet appear not so to him, if he conscientiously enquires into the Matter, and endeavours to discover the Truth. Yea, That a Man would not be obliged

• *obliged to receive the Scriptures themselves, if God
 • knows, that upon a conscientious Enquiry after Truth,
 • he cannot discover the Evidence of them.*

In these Periods it is suppos'd, 1. That Men have *sufficient Means* and *Opportunities*. Without this, it is Non-sense to talk of the *Obligation* of *Scripture-Consequences*, or *Scripture-Premises*: For no Man can be *obliged* by any *Truth* which he has not had *sufficient Means* to find out. There is indeed no inseparable Connexion between a Man's having *sufficient Means* to discern a divine Truth, and his actual *seeing* it; but there is an eternal necessary Connexion between his being *oblig'd* to receive such Truth and his having *sufficient Means* to attain to the knowledge of it. The Jews had sufficient means to discover that Jesus was the *Messias*; otherwise, they could not be condemn'd for their *Unbelief*: But they did not actually *see* it. They concluded that he was an *Impostor* and *Blasphemer*; which was an extreme *Error of Mind*, for which *Wrath* came upon them to the uttermost. 2. It is here suppos'd that under such Means, some discern the Truth of *Scripture-Consequences*, others do not. 3. That those *others* to whom the *Consequences* in question *do not* appear, *do conscientiously* enquire into the Matter, and seek to find out the Truth. Upon which, 4. It is concluded, that *such* are free from all *Obligation* as to these *Consequences*. Now, tho' it be an Absurdity to suppose the *Means* and *Opportunities* *sufficient*, and Men's *Endeavours* to find out the Truth, to be in *Proportion* to them, without answerable *Success*; yet, whilst *this is suppos'd*, and in that case, Men freed from

all *Obligation*, it leaves the *Exception* against the *Authority* of Scripture-Consequences, just as I *stated* it.

HAD there been *less* Confusion of Thought in what you have offered under this *Head*, from pag. 16. to pag. 19. Your Meaning might be more easily apprehended : But as far as I am able to make any thing of your Observations, I cannot but think, you have, in the same Discourse, justify'd, both my *stating* the Objection as I did, and my *Answer* to it. The Objection, Sir, is your own ; and, bating some Inconsistencies, you are *agreed with me* in what I have said against it.



C H A P. III.

Several Considerations offered in Proof of this Doctrine, That plain SCRIPTURE-CONSEQUENCES are Matters of Revelation ; and have the AUTHORITY of Scripture in determining Articles of Faith.

I N what remains, I shall more particularly consider that Part of your *Letter* which most affects the *Regard* which I apprehend is due to manifest and necessary Conclusions from Scripture-Principles. I have already intimated that I own the Truth of your *Concessions* as far as they go ; tho' I cannot conclude with you, that they are every way

way sufficient to secure the proper Use and Honour of all such Consequences. For I do not perceive that you allow them any Authority in stating and determining Articles of Faith. And some Readers cannot but be sensible of a Disappointment, when after a pompous shew of a sacred Regard to such Inferences as naturally arise out of the exprefs Words of Scripture, under five special Heads, they find what you granted explain'd away in your subsequent Distinctions.

THE Doctrine I am concern'd to maintain, is, That manifest and necessary Consequences of plain Scriptural Propositions, are as much a Divine Revelation, and so to be regarded, as the Principles from which they naturally and necessarily flow.

THIS you say, You cannot think. I shall, therefore offer some Considerations in Proof of this Doctrine. And then consider what you, and some others have said to the contrary. Nor can you blame me, if I sometimes plead your own Authority, to which I shall always pay a due Regard.

HERE then it is to be observ'd, that we speak not now of Words, but of Things. What is asserted, is to be understood of Scripture-Consequences materially consider'd. The Doctrines or Truths that necessarily result from one or more Places of Scripture, are, as to the Matter of them, as much a Divine Revelation, as the Passages themselves from which they flow. My general Position cannot be otherwise understood, without a manifest Violation. No Man was ever so absurd as to imagine that Consequences are in the same literal Sense a part of Revelation, as the

34 A DISSERTATION concerning

Words of Scripture; for then they would cease to be *Consequences*. As when we use the Word, *Revelation*, we do not intend by it a *Lexicon of Words* sent down from Heaven; but a supernatural *Discovery of Divine Truths*, or the Signification of the *Will of GOD*; (the Design of a Revelation being, not to teach us how to *speak*, but how to *think* and *act* as becomes reasonable Creatures, capable of *Religion*.) So, when it is affirm'd that *evident Conclusions* from Scripture, are *as much* a Divine Revelation, &c. All that can be meant by this is, that they are *equally Truths* of a *divine Original* with the Principles that *necessarily* comprehend them; and that they have the *same Authority* to determine our Faith.

HAVING *premis'd* this Explication of my Meaning, which I presume will not be excepted against by any; you'll allow me.

I. In the *first Place*, to argue from your own *Concessions*. You grant, 'That *Consequences which justly follow from Scripture-Principles*----may, in 'a Sense, be called a part of Revelation'. This you apply to the Doctrine of a *future State of Happiness for good Men*, which you say, was a part of the *Divine Revelation made in the Books of Moses*, because God therein declared himself the God of the Patriarchs, after their several Deaths. Now if plain Scripture-Consequences may in a Sense be called a part of Revelation, they may be truly so called. And for this very Reason, they must, as to the Matter of them, be as much so, as the Propositions that manifestly and necessarily imply them. That is,

is, they must be Truths of the *same kind*, and of the *same Original Conveyance*. There is no room for a Distinction here of *more or less*. As a *just Consequence* from Propositions containing *Natural Truths*, or Truths found out by human Means, depends *as much* upon the *Nature and Respects* of Things, as the *Premises* it belongs to; so, *necessary Deductions* from Principles purely *supernatural*, have the *same Authority*, the *same Original*, and are *as much* a Revelation, as the primary Truths from which they are derived.

THE Reason of this is, that *such Consequences* are virtually *contain'd* in Scripture, and flow from the *same Fountain of Truth* with the express *Declarations* thereof. Hence they command our *Assent* by *Virtue* of the *Authority* of God over us. To deny that they are *contain'd* in Scripture, is to deny our own Reason, to render all *Argumentation* impossible, and as *Theodore* complains in a Discourse already refer'd to, assimilate *Men* unto *Brutes*. And if they are *contain'd* in Scripture, God must be the *Author* of them; and they are *truly Divine*. Men do not always *see* the *Consequences* of their own *Opinions*; but often disclaim them. It is not so with the *Author and Finisher of our Faith*. He had a perfect *Comprehension* of every Thing he has *revealed*, whether *explicitly*, or by a *necessary Implication*. He knew that from *such* and *such* Propositions *certain Conclusions* would *necessarily* arise in the *Mind* of Man, so that the one *could not* be apprehended, but the other must be understood. Or, as you express it, 'He knew that they might, and design'd that

'they should be collected by reasonable Creatures'. To what Purpose, pray, but to *determine* their Faith, and govern their Practice, in Matters of Religion? And could they be *design'd* for this *End*, if they had not the Perfection and *Authority* of a Divine Revelation? If therefore every Thing contain'd in Scripture, and design'd by GOD, as a part of it, for our Instruction, is a Matter of Revelation, this Regard cannot be denied to plain Scripture-Consequences, without obscuring the *Wisdom* of GOD, and lessening the *Sacredness* of his Truth in the Esteem of Men.

It is to me, therefore, utterly unaccountable, how Men that pretend to plead for the *Perfection* of Scripture, should demur, or except against the *Divine Authority* of what is clearly and necessarily concluded from it: Or, so much as question whether *such* Conclusions are *equally* a Matter of Revelation, with those *first Principles of the Oracles of God*, in which they are virtually contain'd. What kind of Revelation would that be, from which no Inferences could be drawn, on which we might with *equal* Security and Certainty ground our Faith and Hope, as on the most express Declarations? Nothing can be imagined more incongruous with Respect to GOD, or more useless and insignificant with Respect to Man, than such an *unintelligible* Revelation. I say, *unintelligible*, for we cannot understand the *Sense* of any *single* Proposition, (far less of *Complex* Propositions, that have more *Predicates* and *Subjects* than one; and many such we meet with in
the

the sacred Oracles.) But we must unavoidably draw some *Conclusion* from them ; and be every way as much assur'd of its Truth, as that we know any thing of the Propositions themselves. Besides, there is scarce any Proposition that is so absolutely *one*, but it necessarily comprehends more than is *literally* express'd. Whenever these Words, *The Man CHRIST JESUS*, offer themselves to our Thoughts, we cannot help concluding that *Jesus Christ* had a *true Body*, of such a Figure, Parts, and Dimensions ; and that this *Body* was inform'd and animated by a *Rational Soul*, or *Spirit*, of the *same Kind and Species* with other Mens. Whoever denies either of these *Consequences*, denies that *Jesus Christ was a Man*. And these *Inferences*, (supposing them to be *just*) are *equally Scripture-Truths*, with the Expressions that necessarily *include* them. Thus the Words of *Moses*, *In the beginning GOD created the Heaven and the Earth* ; according to the *Ideas* we have of them, contain the following Propositions, That the World had a *Beginning* ; and, That *God* is a Being *substantially* differing from, and more *Excellent* than those *Heavens*, and that *Earth* which he created. So far as these *Consequences* are *just* and *necessary*, so far are they contain'd in the first Proposition : If we consider that, as a Doctrine demonstrable by human Reason, these *Deductions* are Truths of the *same Kind and Evidence* ; and so far as it is a *Matter* of pure Revelation, they are *equally* so.

THAT they are collected or apprehended by Men, alters not their *Nature* or *Quality* : since,

§ 8 A DISSERTATION concerning

as you rightly observe, They are as *'certainly true in themselves, as the Principles from whence they flow, & independent of any Mans collecting them; and whether any actually see them or no'.* *

Nor does it weaken the *Force* of them, that they are, and *must be*, express'd in Words that are not strictly *Canonical*, any more than it derogates from the Authority of Scripture-Expressions, that they were originally *invented* by Men. No Words are properly a part of Revelation, but those in the *original Text*. Nor are (*all*) these absolutely of a *Divine Descent*, as the *Truths* they represent are. They are (most of them) Parts of Revelation only by *Adoption*. For the common Parent of all intelligent Beings, who gave to Men the Power of *Reasoning*, and discerning the *Nature* and *Connexion* of Things, gave them also the Faculty of *Speech*, or a Capacity of composing *Words*, and forming *Languages*, that they might freely communicate their Thoughts to one another. Some of *these* God made use of in revealing his *Mind* and *Will* to Mankind. The *Truths*, or *Things* contain'd in that Revelation, and not the *arbitrary Signs* of conveying, or representing them, are the proper and ultimate *Object* of our Understandings. So that the *Sense* of Scripture, and not the *Sound* of Words, is what we are chiefly to regard, unless we will renounce our *Understandings*, and frustrate the *End* of a *Revelation*. And a Proposition in the *Eng-*

lish Tongue, that truly expresses the Sense of Scripture, is as much a divine Revelation, and so to be regarded, as the same Proposition in the Greek or Hebrew Originals. It suffices, whether in Originals, Translations, or necessary Inferences, that the Words, or Signs be accommodated to represent the Thing or Doctrine intended to be signify'd by them, plainly, and without Deceit; which is all the Use they serve for.

II. Secondly, To set this Matter in a more unexceptionable Light, the Scriptures make no Distinction between their own express Declarations, and the Consequences that naturally result from them; but teach us to regard these, as a part of themselves, and as of equal Authority with what is formally written. This will appear by an Induction of some Particulars. *Act. 24. v. 25, 26, 27. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of Heart to believe, all that the Prophets have SPOKEN, ought nor Christ to have suffer'd these things, and to enter into his Glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them, in ALL THE SCRIPTURES the things concerning HIMSELF. And v. 44, 46. He said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were WRITTEN * in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning ME.*

This it is WRITTEN, [yea] and thus it be-

hoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. It will not be pretended that the Things here mention'd were syllabically contain'd in either of these Divisions of Holy Writ; or that the Disciples, who are here reprov'd for their slowness of heart to believe, could receive the Testimony of the Prophets concerning them, without admitting the Authority of just and lawful Consequences. Yet they are said to be *spoken by the Prophets*, to be *in the Scriptures*, and to be *written in the Law of Moses*. So that if we will be determin'd by the Judgment of our Saviour, in this Case, my general Proposition is true beyond all all Dispute; for he regarded Scripture-Consequences as Scripture itself. When he bid the Jews, *search the Scriptures*, Job. 5. 39. It was to this End, that out of them they might gather He was the promis'd Messias. This they could never do; they could neither examine the prophetical Writings, nor gather from thence that Jesus was the Messiah, without making a Judgment on Things, and drawing Inferences, on which they might depend with as much Security, as on the express Words of Scripture. When in the same place he adds, *They [the Scriptures] testify of me*; he could not mean it of any literal Testimony concerning Jesus of Nazareth; any more than the Evangelist, who says, *It was spoken by the Prophets he shall be called a Nazarene*, could mean, that That Prediction was *verbo tenus* to be read in their Writings; but they testify'd of him really and truly; and this Testimony was as valid, and as much a Divine Revelation, as the most formal Expressions could be; and lest those

those who receiv'd it not, *as much* without Excuse. He therefore, tells them, *had ye believed Moses*, (had you with Understanding and Judgment believed his Doctrine; for they readily own'd the Words of Scripture) *ye would have believed me* (to be the Messiah) *for he WROTE of ME*, V. 46.

If it be said that our Saviour was *Infalible* in his *Deductions*, and might urge them upon the Consciences of his Hearers by virtue of his own *Authority*, which others may not pretend to, or presume to do. I answer, That his *Authority* was the thing in question: And had he made use of any *fallacious* Argument to prove it by, it would make against him. But it is plain he does not here barely assert his own Authority, or his *Witness of Himself*; but appeals to the *Scriptures*, and to their own *Understandings*. And the Method he puts them upon is a Demonstration, that *they themselves* might draw *such Conclusions* from Scripture, had they *search'd* them with due care, and Preparation of Mind, as were *infalibly* true, on which they might, with Confidence, ground their Faith; and which had all the Force and Authority of a divine Revelation. It is also evident that they actually built their Faith on *Scripture-Inferences*: since without these, they could never *think*, as they did, that *Eternal Life*, and the *Way* to it was reveal'd in the Old Testament. So that our Saviour's *Infalibility* strengthens my *Argument*; and undeniably proves that manifest and necessary *Consequences* from Scripture, are *Scripture-Revelations*, and so to be regarded and de-

pended on ; otherwise our Saviour would never determine that they were so ; nor direct his Hearers to rely upon them as such, in a Matter of the greatest Importance.

HIS *Apostles* follow'd the same Method. St. Peter prov'd the *Resurrection* of CHRIST by a Train of *Consequences* out of the XVI. Psalm *. The Infidel *Jews* were convinc'd by his Reasoning, not by his Authority. And no Christian can imagine he would have offered a *Proof* which was not, in its own Nature, sufficiently convincing, and of such Evidence as to leave *Unbelievers* without Excuse. St. Paul never scruples to affirm † how that Christ died for our Sins according to the Scriptures : and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. Which he would never have done, if Articles of Faith might not be prov'd by evident Conclusions from Scripture-Principles. Thus, *Act.* 17. 2, 3. He reason'd with the *Jews* in *Thessalonica*, out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen from the Dead, and that Jesus was the Christ. The Words *Διαβολῶν* and *μεγροῦσιναι*, refer to the Scriptures out of which he reason'd with the *Jews*. He laid open the Meaning and Design of them ; and by collating one thing with another, (so *μεγροῦσιναι* imports) Prophecies with Events, Types and Figures with the Things signify'd by them, he so adapted and applied the Sense and

* *Ab.* 2.

† *1 Cor.* 15. 3, 4.

Scope of the ancient Oracles, that out of them he prov'd, (or made it plain to their Eye-Sight) that Jesus was the Christ. Whence it follows that just and lawful Consequences from Scripture, are not to be distinguish'd from Scripture-Revelations; and that they have Authority to determine Mens Faith. It was a Matter of Faith to the Jews, or ought to have been so, That Christ must needs have suffer'd, and arise from the Dead; and that Jesus was the Christ. And yet the Apostle proposes these Propositions to them, as Consequences infer'd from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. He did not interpose the Authority of an Apostle, which was not acknowledg'd by them; (nor did his Authority add any Force to his Argument) but he reasoned with them, (which was an Appeal to their own Judgments) and prov'd his Doctrine by Scripture-Inferences. It is remarkable that the noble Bereans (with whom the Apostle dealt in the same manner) were not determin'd by his Authority, but search'd the Scriptures; whether things were as he represented them †. They never disputed the Evidence of a just and lawful Consequence. Their Concern was to know whether those rais'd by St. Paul were so or no. To this purpose they search'd the Scriptures, with Accuracy, Diligence, and by making of Judgments, as the Expression denotes. And finding Things as the Apostle delivered them, they are convinc'd; they receive his Doctrine with all Readiness of Mind, and fix their

† Act. 17. ii. — Τὸ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀναγινώσκοντες τὰς γράμματα —

Faith on the uncontrollable Evidence of Reason, and good Sense. This was truly noble. Whereas had they insisted on it, that the Apostle in appealing to *Scripture*, should shew his Doctrine to be in so many Words contain'd therein, had they refus'd to be concluded by *Argument*, or to admit a Persuasion from just and sober Reasoning; had they told the Apostle that *Consequences*, how true soever in themselves, could not be a Matter of Faith to them, or, That Things necessary were not left to *Consequences*, they had been unworthy of that moral Character, which is signify'd by the Word *Σπινιστος*; which Excellency of Spirit is denied of the Jews in *Thessalonica*, who, tho' they acknowledg'd the *Scriptures*, yet, saw not the Apostles Grounds; and seem to have been of Opinion, that nothing deduc'd by Consequence could warrant a firm Belief, or be esteem'd an Article of Faith.

III. THIRDLY, The Manner in which our Saviour proved the Truth of the *Resurrection*, is of itself, sufficient to decide this Controversy. For if *Scripture-Consequences* never can have Authority to determine Mens Faith, if they must be always distinguished from the Authority of *Scripture*; He took a very wrong Method to convince the *Sadducees*, who at that time came to try him, and watch all Opportunities of lessening his Esteem. The Doctrine of the *Resurrection* was contain'd in that Oracle, *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob*, or it was not? The Negative will be rejected by every Christian, as
Blaphemy

Blasphemy against our LORD, who expressly affirms That *Moses shewed at the Bush, that the Dead are raised* *. And the Affirmative cannot be consistently held, without owning that just Inferences from Scripture are as *divinely true*, as the Propositions from which they spring, and of equal Authority in Matters of Faith. If this be denied we must discharge the *Sadducees* from any Obligation to believe that a *future State* was revealed in the Law. And then how comes our Saviour to censure them as *greatly erroneous* ?

If it be said, that he condemn'd them for not receiving the other inspired Writings, in which there are more direct Assertions of this Doctrine, and not because they *saw not* the Resurrection in the Books of *Moses*; as you suggest †.

I answer, 1. That the common Opinion of the *Sadducees* rejecting the other prophetick Writings, is grounded only upon an uncertain Tradition, on which no Argument can be founded. The *Evangelists*, who are very particular in mentioning their Errors, take no notice of this. Nor is it likely they should be in so much Repute, or bear so great a Sway in the *Jewish Nation* as they did, had they openly disclaim'd all Regard to the rest of the Prophets: Tho' they might perhaps give a Preference to the Five Books of *Moses*, which were the Foundation of their Law, and even a *Standard* by which they were to try the Doctrines of the succeeding Prophets. Had they

* *Luk.* 20. 37.

† *Letter*, p. 16.

expressly renounc'd the Authority of the other parts of Scripture, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa, it is very probable our Saviour would as expressly condemn them for it; as he did the *Pharisees* for their corrupt Gloss on the Law, and the superstitious Regard they pay'd to the *Traditions* of the *Elders*. Nor does his confuting them out of *Moses*, rather than any other *inspired Writer* prove any such Thing. Other and better Reasons may be assign'd for the Method he took, than barely the use of an Argument *ad hominem*. For the Law, as I hinted already, was the *original Standard* by which all Doctrines were to be tried. It contain'd the *Covenant* of GOD with that Church and Nation; which was the Foundation of their Faith. Hence it was most proper that an *Article* of this Importance in Religion, should be prov'd to be contain'd in that *Law* or *Covenant*. And perhaps no one single Text can be produc'd out of the *Old Testament*, that contains a more solid and substantial Proof of a *future State*, (which was the main point in question) and, consequently, of a *Resurrection* then that alledged by our Saviour; the Argument from it being founded on GOD's *Covenant* with the *Patriarchs*. This [*I am the God of Abraham, &c.*] being his *Name* for ever, and his chosen *Memorial*, and declared to be so, long after their Deaths; was a plain and positive Proof that they were *still* in Covenant with him; that GOD was *their* GOD, and *they* his *Beneficiaries*, Which was a direct Confutation of the *Heretic* of the *Sadducees*, who denied the Existence of Souls in a separate State, and had no Hopes after this

Life

Life. If *Jehovah* was in the time of *Moses* the *GOD* of the *Patriarchs*; if they were still in Covenant with him, (as the Words ran in the form of the Covenant; with which every natural Jew was well acquainted.) It follows by a plain indubitable *Consequence*, that they still *existed*, and were alive to *GOD*; it being impossible that *Jehovah* should be the *GOD* of the absolutely dead. Thus a future State being, I may venture to say, asserted by *Moses* in this famous Oracle, it required no long or difficult Train of Reasoning to infer from thence the *Resurrection of the Dead*. Nor had the *Sadducees* denied it, had they believed a future State of Rewards and Punishments after this Life.

BUT, 2.^o Whether that *Set* rejected the other divine Writings or not, it does not alter the Case now before us. For when our Saviour censures them as *erring*, and *not knowing the Scriptures*, he means those *very Scriptures* out of which he confuted their impious Tenets. To suggest the contrary, as you seem to do, is to speak at random, without any colour of Proof, and in a way not very honourable to our *LORD*: As implying that the *Sadducees* might *understand* and *believe* the Writings of *Moses*, and particularly that part of the *Law* refer'd to, and yet *not believe a Resurrection* and a *future State*. Which, whoever thinks, must, if he is not resolv'd to defy all *Consequences*, think at the same time, that our Saviour argued very poorly. When our *LORD* appealed to *that which was spoken unto them by God*, saying, *I am the God of Abraham, &c.* He appealed to those very *Scriptures*

Scriptures which they *understood not*, and which were a convincing Evidence of the Doctrine denied by them. This is more fully express'd by *S. Luke, Ch. 20. V. 37, 38. Now that the Dead are raised even Moses SHEWED at the Bush, when he calleth the LORD the God of Abraham. — For he is not a God of the Dead, but of the Living.* The Word *shewed* imports it was the Design of that solemn Declaration, to point out a Life after this. And the Order of the Words, in *St. Mark*, plainly shews that the *Sadducees* are censur'd for not being determined by the Authority of *Moses*; for after an Appeal to his *Decision*, it follows, *Ye therefore do greatly err; viz. in denying what Moses shewed at the Bush.*

IN all this our Saviour did not once urge his own Authority. Nor did he impose upon the *Sadducees* any human *Decisions*; but he proved the Point from *Scripture*. The Argument was, in its own Nature, conclusive; and perhaps as good as could be fetch'd from the Old Testament. They could as easily evade the plainest Text, in the *Psalms*, or the *Prophets*, as this Consequence, *God is not the God of the Dead, but of the Living, therefore, the Patriarchs are still alive unto God.* Had it been propos'd by a *Pharisee*, or any of those *Jews* who believ'd a future State, the *Sadducees* ought to have yielded to its Evidence: yea, they were *inexcusable* in that they themselves did not discern it, and resolve their Faith into it.

WE may farther observe, That our Lord made no such Distinction, as our new Methodists do, between

between the exprefs Declarations of Scripture, and the *Conclusions* that necessarily flow from them; but on this, as well as on other Occasions, regarded them as of equal force to oblige the Conscience. What might be *justly inferr'd* from Scripture, tho' not *literally exprest'd*, is said by him to be *spoken by the Prophets*, to be *in the Scriptures*, *written in the Law*, and *shewed by Moses*. And many Instances might be given in which his *inspired Ministers* exprest themselves in as strong Terms, when they prov'd their Doctrine by a Succession of *Consequences*. Especially in their Disputes about *Justification*, and the *Law*. Even those Points that were solemnly decided in Council, the Apostles afterwards prov'd by Inferences out of the *Old Testament*. Which they would never have done, if such Arguments were not sufficient to direct our Faith. And tho' we are not *infallible* in all our Deductions, as they were, yet the use they made of the Scriptures, being in reality an Appeal to the *Judgments* of *fallible Men*, undeniably proves that we are capable of making *true and certain* Inferences, on which we may depend with as much *Security*, as on any Proposition contain'd in the *Bible*. Nor is it indeed, possible we can *understand* any thing that is *said*, without *conceiving* more than is *express'd*.

OUR Saviour and his Apostles had to do with a very captious sort of People; and yet we find not that they made any Exceptions against this way of proving Articles of Faith. When Christ bid the *Jews* search the Scriptures, as *testifying*

of him, and tells 'em that *Moses* wrote of him, they were not so *settish* as to demand *simple* Texts, in which what he declared unto them, as a *Matter of Revelation*, was formally written. Even the *Saducees* themselves were Strangers to this kind of *Shuffling*. How easily might they, upon the Principles of some modern *Scepticks*, have put our Saviour to *Silence*, instead of being *silenc'd* by him. It was but telling him, whatever is written in our Law explicitly, and in so many Words, is indeed *the Matter of our Faith*. But as for your *Deductions*, we can make no account of them; they can never be a sure ground of Belief to us. *Things necessary depend not upon Consequences.* * Shew us where our Lawgiver *Moses*, makes express mention of the Resurrection of the Dead, the Immortality of the Souls of Men, or their living in a separate State, and we will believe: If you cannot do this, we ought not to be censured as *greatly erroneous*, for denying a *Consequence*, whilst we profess our Belief of every thing that is expressly found in our Law, and readily own the *Words of Scripture* †. Thus they might have exploded our Saviour's Argument, (who on this Occasion reason'd with them as a private Man would do) had they been of the same Sentiments with some in our Day, whose Faith seems to be in empty Sounds. But they were Strangers to these *Childish* and *Sophistical Evasions*. And tho' their Lusts were so interested, that they were wil-

* *Reply of the Non-Subscribing Ministers, 2d Part, p. 18. 21.*

† *Ibid. p. 17.*

ling to exempt themselves from the Fears of a future Judgment; they made no Exception against the Force of a lawful Consequence. They seem to go away *convinc'd*, tho' unwillingly. The Scribes and Pharisees, who were extremely prejudic'd against our Saviour, and would not like an Argument the better for his using it, confess'd that he *answered them well*. And the *Multitude* gave their *Amen*, being ravish'd with his Doctrine.

CHAP. IV.

The foregoing Doctrine farther confirm'd, and Objections answer'd. That some Consequences depend not on any arbitrary Act of our Minds in collecting them. That to deny the Authority of Scripture-Consequences in divine Matters, because they are deduc'd by Ratiocination, is to over-turn all Certainty of Faith among Men. A Digression proving, against a late Writer, that there may be actual Certainty in Matters of Faith; and that this is a Protestant Principle. That Mr. Evans's Objection destroys such Certainty farther urg'd. That we have as sure a way to ascertain ourselves of the Truth and Lawfulness of Scripture-Consequences; as we have to ascertain our-

selves of any Traditional Revelation. Or that we understand the Signification of any Words in which it is deliver'd; or the Meaning of any Propositions. Or that any Translation truly expresses the Sense of the HOLY GHOST. That the new Plea strikes at the grand Principles of NATURAL RELIGION; and renders the Creed of a Deist, as uncertain as the Faith of a Christian. The Comparison from the Case of Assurance not pertinent. A COROLLARY, shewing that an Assent founded on Scripture - Consequences is a Divine Faith, &c.

I AM here to consider what you alledge against the foregoing Doctrine, under your first Head of *Distinctions*; Letter, Pag. 10, 11, 12. 'You cannot think that Consequences from Scripture are in the same strict Sense a part of Revelation, or, as I express it, as much a divine Revelation, and so to be regarded, as the Principles from which they flow; because there is a Mixture of the Reasoning of fallible Men in the Collection of them, along with the infallible Declarations of the Word of God: Which must in some Measure weaken the force of them, in Comparison of the Primary Truths from which they are deriv'd'. — This is the whole of your Argument. And you illustrate it, by telling us, That 'You take this Case to resemble that of Assurance about our own Interest in the Blessings of the Covenant; which

‘ which several worthy Divines made to be the Essence
‘ of saving Faith’.

I shall presently examine this Plea. But allow me, *first*, to suppose, seeing you refer to what I said, That by *Consequences*, here, you must mean such as *naturally* and *necessarily* flow from plain Scriptural Propositions; for such only am I concern’d to vindicate. And I hope these *Qualifications* signify something, whether, when applied to any particular Consequence, you, or I see them or not. In the *Advices for EXETER*, you with the rest of our *Non-subscribing* Brethren, tell us ‘ you desire to secure the Evidence arising from Scripture-Consequences : And in your Defence of them ‘ we are told, ‘ That you worded it so on Purpose, to ‘ distinguish between Consequences that have Evidence, ‘ and those that have none. † I had as good Reason to use the Expressions, *manifest*, *necessary*, *natural*, to distinguish the Consequences that are so, from those which are *not*, or which are *ambiguous* only. And tho’ you say, Pag. 12, and 18. of your Letter, that these Words are of little Service, to support my Proposition, as amounting to no more than this, *That such a Consequence is manifest to you or me, that it is necessary in our Judgment ;*-----

But that as this conveys no Light at all to others, so, if they could not see the same Conclusion from Scripture, as we do, how could that be binding to them? Yet, you as expressly grant in other parts of your Letter, (Pag. 7. 10. 16.) That they are certainly true, independent of any Mans collecting them ; that the

* Reply. 2 Part. Pag. 20.

Question is not what a Man sees, or does not see, &c. And that you would never state the Objection, That others who see not Scripture-Consequences are under no Obligation from them. And what is this, but (at the Expence of Contradictions) to confess the Truth; That Scripture-Consequences depend not, either as to their Quality, or Obligation, upon the Judgments which Men form concerning them; since these Judgments can never alter the Nature and Respects of Things; and it may be Mens own Fault, that they receive not the full Meaning and Compass of those Truths which God design'd for their Instruction.

I would also remind the Reader, That the present Dispute is not about Words, but Things: Not what Phrases are Canonical, but what Doctrines are truly Divine. So that if by the same strict Sense you mean, the same literal Sense, you have no Adversary that I know of; for no Mortal was ever so void of Sense, as to imagine that those Inferences which result from Scripture, are syllabically written there.

BUT tho' they are not literally a part of the sacred Writing itself, yet being Truths sprung in our Minds by the Declarations of Scripture, they are, as to the Matter of them, as much a divine Revelation, and so to be regarded, as the Principles whence they naturally and necessarily flow.

THIS they are, notwithstanding what you object of a Mixture of the Reasoning of fallible Men in the Collection of them. For how can such Reasoning affect

affect *just* and *lawful* Consequences, seeing, as you observe, they are *certainly true* independent of any Man's collecting them? Strange! That my *seeing* a *Consequence* should obscure its *Truth*, or *weaken* the *force* of it, when *in itself* it is an eternal *Truth*, whether any actually see it or no! But it seems *Mens Apprehensions* have a wonderful *Efficacy*. Sometimes they render a *Consequence* sacred, and *Obligatory* upon *Conscience*, without any *Regard* to what it is in its own *Nature*: At other *Times*, tho' a *Consequence* be as *true* as the *Bible*, yet if a *Man*, a *fallible* *Man*, happily *sees* or *collects* it; it presently looses its *Force*, and ceases to be that *Infallible* *Truth* it was before! How fatal would this *seeing* *Faculty* be, if it work'd such a *Metamorphosis* among natural *Objects*? And yet *Metaphysical* or *Moral* *Truths*, the *Agreement* or *Disagreement* of certain *Ideas*, are much more inflexible and unchangeable. You grant * ' *It was a certain* *Truth*, and a part of the *divine Revelation* made in the *Books* of *Moses*, that there was a future *State* of *Happiness* for good *Men*, because *God* therein declared himself the *God* of *Abraham*, of *Isaac* and of *Jacob*, after their *several* *Deaths*; *This*, you add, *Was a just* and certain *Consequence*, whether any actually saw it or no'. Suppose then a *Sadducee* had seen it, and reason'd as our *Saviour* did, *God is not the God of the Dead*, but of the *Living*, would this enervate that *Truth*, or render it less a part of *divine* *Revelation*? Alas! Sir, we have too many *Instances* of the

* *Letter*, 2. 8.

Weakness and Fallibility of human Reasoning, and for that very Reason we ought not to ascribe such a Virtue to it, as that of altering the Nature and Reason of Things.

BUT your Meaning might be, *That we cannot be equally certain of the Truth of Scripture-Consequences, as we are of the Truth of those Propositions from which they issue; and that this must weaken the force of them in our Esteem.* But neither does this affect the Sacredness, and certain Verity of such Consequences consider'd in themselves. Whether we have any Assurance about them or no, it never alters the Property or Genuineness of them. They may be infallibly true, and we may have sufficient Means to discover them, tho' we should never actually imploy our Reason in Search of them.

THE Fallibility of *human Reasoning*, is, I confess, the most plausible Objection that can be alledged against the *Authority* and binding Force of Scripture-Consequences. And since this very Plea is made use of, not only to weaken the Force of *these*, but to overthrow all *Certainty* in Matters of Faith, I shall endeavour to give a full and satisfactory Answer to it.

I. And, *first*, I would observe, that *some* Consequences are so *unavoidable*, (tho' Men willingly blind, may not see them) that it is more proper to say, they *force* themselves upon us, than that they are *collected* by us. For tho' it may be in our Power to withhold our Thoughts from a close attentive Survey of those Objects, or Propositions which are propounded to them; yet, when

when we accurately consider the Nature and Reason of Things, and diligently enquire into the Meaning and Evidence of certain Propositions, it is not in our Power to obviate or resist some *Consequences* that necessarily arise out of our *Ideas*. They come pouring in upon us; and that without any *voluntary* Exercise of our Rational Faculties; nay, perhaps, even against our Wills. Thus from the Consideration of what God is, and what MAN is, we cannot help *concluding* that it is the Duty of Man to honour God. 'Tis true, a Man may work his Mind to such a pitch of practical Atheism, as never to think seriously on *either* of these *Objects*; and so be willingly ignorant of all Moral Obligations towards his *Maker*, on whom he continually depends. But it is impossible for him to turn his Thoughts this way, without seeing the above mention'd *Consequence*, and being as *infallibly certain* of the Truth of it, as he is, or can be, of his own *Existence*, or the *Existence* of God. Consequences of this irresistible Evidence, the apprehending of which scarce depends on that Exercise of our Faculties which is called *Judgment*, or on any *Arbitrary* Operation of our Minds in *searching* them out, are proper *Objects* of *Knowledge*. Whether our *Ideas*, as refer'd to particular *Objects* or Propositions, are in themselves *true* or *false*: It is a Matter of *Knowledge* and undoubted *Certainty*, that from such *real* or *suppos'd* Principles, certain Consequences unavoidably and irrefragably result. And we can no more avoid *seeing* them, if we attentively consider the *Premises*, than we can avoid seeing

I

Objects.

Objects, if we will but open our Eyes in broad Day-Light. Either therefore we are utterly incapable of being *infallibly certain* of the Truth of any Thing or we may be perfectly *assured* of the Truth of *some Consequences*, notwithstanding the *Fallibility* of human Reason. That the Proposition, *These Three are ONE GOD*, is a *Consequence* of this sort of Evidence, from *Premises* acknowledged by you and me ; so that if these *Premises* be true, this *Consequence* must not only be true in itself, but must *unavoidably* be discern'd to be a *necessary Consequence*, by every one who will but take the Pains to look into these *Premises* ; I shall more fully shew in its proper Place.

II. *Secondly*, As to those *Consequences* that may more strictly be said, to be collected from Scripture by *Argument* and *Discourse*, which Deduction is a proper Act of Ratiocination ; We have the same *Assurance* concerning them, as we have that we *understand* the *Premises*. If we can arrive at any *Certainty* concerning the Meaning of Scripture Words or Propositions, we have the very same *Security* concerning the *Conclusions* that naturally rise out of them. And if we may not, with an undoubted Confidence, build our Faith upon plain Inferences from Scripture, *because there is a Mixture of human Reasoning in the Collection of them*, neither can we with a firm Persuasion found our Faith upon express Declarations, because it is by our *rational Faculties* that we search out and apprehend their Sense and Meaning. So that if this Objection proves any thing, it proves too much ; viz.

That

That having us'd our best Endeavours to understand the Mind and Will of GOD in his *Word*, we can after all, arrive at no *Certainty* of Faith or Knowledge, but must be toss'd up and down in a miserable Suspence, questioning and doubting every thing, and scarce be able to reach at a Semi-*Perfuasion* in Matters of the greatest Moment.

AND must we turn *Scepticks*, because we are not *Infallible*? Because in some things our *Judgment* may deceive us, are we therefore incapable of making any *certain* Inferences? Because we may err, does it therefore follow that we can never be *sure* of any Thing? These are the hopeful Consequences of denying all *Certainty* of human Reasoning, either in finding out the Meaning of Scripture Words, or in drawing Conclusions from them. It destroys all *Certainty* in Matters of Faith. But,

III. *Thirdly*, Because some will not like your *Objection* the worse, that it may be press'd with such *Consequences*, it will not be improper, e're I urge them farther, to examine the Plea of those, who tell us roundly that we cannot be *certain* of any thing of this *kind*, and that to pretend to it, is to set up the *same* Claim with the *Pope* and Church of *Rome*. If this be true, it is no just Exception against your Argument that it destroys *such Certainty*; whereas if the contrary be true, your *Objection* must needs be fallacious. It will not therefore carry us wide of the Argument between us, but will be rather a Foundation to go upon, if we enquire a little into the Merits of this Plea.

THE anonymous Author of *The Nature and Consequences of Enthusiasm considered, &c.* Who, under the Guise of a *Protestant Dissenter*, has entered the Lists against the *Subscribing Ministers*, or rather against *the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity*, is very bold and peremptory on this Head. He makes himself merry with the following Expressions of the Reverend Mr. *Tong*. “ We are far
 “ from pretending to an infallible Judgment about
 “ Gospel Truth and Error, but we take it to be
 “ an agreed Point with Protestants, *that there may*
 “ *be Certainty, where there is not Infallibility*; and
 “ none can deny this, unless they will venture to
 “ assert, that we can in no Case know we are in
 “ the Right, but by being assured that it is im-
 “ possible for us, in any Case, to be in the
 “ Wrong †”. This the *Letter-Writer* calls, *a very*
peculiar and remarkable piece of Reasoning; which,
 ‘ *being to his Understanding, a plain Contradiction,*
 ‘ *he will never believe that all Protestants are agreed in*
 ‘ *it, till he has better Authority for it*. But what
 if one should shew him, that this Reasoning is
 not peculiar to Mr. *Tong*, and offer some Proof
 that it is no more remarkable than true? Will he
 then confess that his Surprise was the Effect of
 Ignorance; or that he wilfully put an absurd
 Sense on Words capable of a just and sober Mean-
 ing? However it may be as to the former, I very
 much suspect this last. For when it is asserted,

* *The Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity stated and defended by some*
London Ministers. Introdect. Pag. 5.

that there may be Certainty, (about Gospel Truth and Error,) where there is *not* Infallibility, any Candid Reader would take the Meaning to be, that we may be actually certain concerning *some* such Points, without being absolutely infallible in *every* such Point. If this be a *plain Contradiction* to his Understanding, who can help it? Perhaps the Nature and Consequences of *Enthusiasm* have vapour'd his Head, that he imagins he sees Contradictions where they are not; but then 'tis pity he should in the very next Page own, *That Men may be certain or infallible in some Cases, without being so in all* (I presume he means) *such Cases*. For what is this but what he calls Mr. Tong's plain Contradiction, in other Words?

He proceeds, Pag. 7, 8. 'The whole World is agreed that there may be Certainty, strict infallible Certainty in Matters of Science; but they must be very weak Protestants, if there are any such, who talk of Certainty in Matters of Faith.' Mr. Chillingworth, it is thought, was no very weak Protestant, nor do I remember, that he was reputed an *Enthusiast*; and yet he talks of Certainty in Matters of Faith, when with the same Breath he disclaims *Infallibility*. His Adversary argued, That if the Church may err, or be deceiv'd in some Points of Faith, *She must be always uncertain in all such Points*. This Consequence, I suppose, Mr.—would grant, for its own Sake, to shew his Averſion to *Popery*, and lest he should be counted *Enthusiastical*. But Mr. Chillingworth knew better Things. He understood the Nature and Consequences of such a Concession; and that to
yield

yield this single Point would be to betray the Religion of Protestants into the Hands of the Papists. For nothing could recommend Popery more, than that upon Protestant Principles, it would be impossible to come to any Certainty in divine Matters. He therefore denies the Conclusion, and gives these substantial Reasons. * ‘ My Senses
 ‘ may sometimes possibly deceive me, yet I am
 ‘ certain enough that I see what I see, and feel
 ‘ what I feel. Our Judges are not infallible in
 ‘ their Judgments, yet they are certain that they
 ‘ judge aright, and that they proceed according to
 ‘ the Evidence that is given, when they condemn
 ‘ a Thief, or a Murderer to the Gallows. A Traveller is not always certain of his Way, but often
 ‘ Mistaken; and doth it therefore follow that he
 ‘ can have no Assurance that Charing-Cross is his
 ‘ right way from the Temple to White-Hall? The
 ‘ Ground of your Error here is, your not distinguishing between ACTUAL CERTAINTY and ABSOLUTE INFALLIBILITY. Geometricians,
 ‘ he adds, are not Infallible in their own Science: yet they are very certain of those things which
 ‘ they see demonstrated. And Carpenters are not
 ‘ Infallible, yet certain of the Straightness of those
 ‘ Things which agree with their Rule and Square’. This Reasoning he applies to Matters of Faith thus, ‘ So tho’ the Church be not infallibly certain,
 ‘ that in all her Definitions, whereof some are about
 ‘ disputable and ambiguous Matters, she shall proceed

* The Religion of Protestants a safe Way to Salvation, &c. Ed. 4.
 Pag. 108,

‘ according to her Rule; yet being CERTAIN of the
 ‘ INFALLIBILITY of her Rule, and that in this
 ‘ or that thing she doth manifestly proceed according
 ‘ to it, she may be CERTAIN of the Truth of some
 ‘ particular Decrees, and yet not certain that she shall
 ‘ never decree but what is true’.

THESE Words need no Comment. And that
 it was his settled Judgment, there may be *actual*
 Certainty in Matters of Faith, where there is not
absolute Infallibility, appears from several other
 Passages. Thus, *Pag. 90.* still speaking of Mat-
 ters of Faith, he calls it a mere *Sophism* to say,
 ‘ That whosoever possibly may err, he cannot be certain
 ‘ that he doth not err? And *Pag. 86.* ‘ If you ask,
 ‘ seeing we may possibly err, how can we be assured we
 ‘ do not? I ask you again, seeing your Eye-Sight may
 ‘ deceive you, how can you be sure you see the Sun, when
 ‘ you do see it? Perhaps you may be in a Dream, &c’.
 And *Pag. 121.* ‘ What if they [the Protestants]
 ‘ say that the Catholick Church, and much more them-
 ‘ selves, may possibly err in some Points, is it therefore
 ‘ Consequent, that they can be CERTAIN of none
 ‘ such? What if a wiser Man than I may mistake the
 ‘ Sense of some obscure place of Aristotle, may I not
 ‘ therefore without any Arrogance or Inconsequence,
 ‘ conceive myself CERTAIN that I understand him
 ‘ in some places——? ——we pretend not at all to
 ‘ any Assurance that we cannot err, but only to a suffi-
 ‘ cient CERTAINTY that we do not err, but right-
 ‘ ly understand those things that are plain, whether
 ‘ Fundamental or not Fundamental’. Thus *Pag. 236.*
 To this Cavil, that our first Reformers ought to have
 doubted whether their Opinions were certain, he an-
 swers,

swers, 'Which is to say, that they ought to have doubt-
'ed of the Certainty of Scripture'. And subjoins,
'tho' they had not an absolute Infallibility promis'd
'unto them, yet they may be of some things INFAL-
'LIBLY CERTAIN.—And so tho' Calvin
'and Melancthon were not infallible in all things,
'yet they might and did know well enough, that your
'Latin Service was condemn'd by St. Paul, and that
'the Communion in both Kinds was taught by our Sa-
'viour'. It seems this Man was certain of Conse-
quences also, tho' there be a Mixture of human
Reasoning in the Collection of them.

I might produce divers other Passages to the
same Purpose, out of this learned Author. These
may suffice to shew that the Reasoning Mr.—
ridicules, is not peculiar to Mr. Tong. The famous
Chillingworth argued after the same manner, when
he was demolishing one of the strongest Holds of
Popery; (the very Plea made use of in our Days
by some (shall I say weak?) Protestants, to intro-
duce a Religious Scepticism. He thought it no
Absurdity, no Contradiction to suppose, that
there may be Certainty, actual Certainty, where
there is not absolute Infallibility. He was so
weak, as to think, that the Church might be Cer-
tain of the Infallibility of her Rule; Certain that
in some things she understood her Rule aright;
and Certain that some of her Definitions were true.
Yea, that private Doctors might of some things
be Infallibly Certain, as that the Latin Service is
condemn'd by St. Paul. And was he all this
while exposing himself to Ridicule?

BUT

BUT our nameless Author is a declared Enemy to all Certainty of Faith. He cannot brook the Thoughts of it. It is Popery ! ' *I cannot see,* *
' *saith he, That you are inclin'd to yeild an Inch to*
' *his Holiness in this Point, but that in whatever you*
' *think fit to declare as a necessary Article of Faith,*
' *or necessary to Salvation, you are as infallible as the*
' *Pope himself*'. If he were not stark blind or worse, he could never draw such an Inference from these Words, *there may be Certainty, where there is not Infallibility*. I am certain that his Consequence is false, does it therefore follow that I plead for an absolute Freedom from Error, in judging of all Consequences? But let us hear what follows. ' *You have disclaim'd no Infallibility, but an*
' *universal unlimited Infallibility in every thing, or an*
' *absolute Freedom from Error*'. And what other kind of Infallibility would he have Men disclaim? Would he have us renounce our Reason, and our Senses? This we must do, if we tamely grant that we can't be infallibly certain of any thing. What? Will not this *Sceptick* yield one *Inch* of *Infallibility* to intelligent Beings? Can't we be infallibly certain that such and such Propositions are contain'd in Scripture? And have as certain a *Certainty* that we understand some of them aright, as we have that we understand the true Sense of any Words or Propositions that can be spoken, written, or demonstrated? He must be a very weak Protestant indeed, who should blame the *Pope* of Rome

* *The Nature and Consequences of Enthusiasm considered, &c.*
Pag. 9.

if he claim'd no more than *this* ; which is the Birth-right of all Mankind, excepting those, who to avoid *Enthusiasm*, turn giddy with *Scepticism*.

Incidit in Scyllam cupiens vitare Charybdin.

What we justly condemn in the *Pope* and Church of *Rome* is, that they pretend to an *absolute Infallibility* in all Matters of Faith ; so that whatever they decree to be an Article of Faith, and necessary to Salvation, is so, by Virtue of their Sentence : And that all Christians are bound, under pain of Damnation, (and all the temporal Penalties they have power to inflict) to submit to their unexamined Decisions, and to believe them infallible, for the mere Authorities sake, tho' they have a Demonstration to the contrary. This Privilege of Infallibility they appropriate to the See of *Rome*, and leave all the rest of Mankind under the same wild *Uncertainty* this *Gentleman* is bringing them to. And is there any Parallel between this impious Claim, and asserting that such is the nature of the rational Soul, made after the Image of GOD, that we may attain to an actual *Certainty* concerning some divine Matters, those especially that are most plainly revealed, and of the greatest Importance to be known ? All the *Infallibility* any modest Man ever pretended to, is, an Assurance that in some Things he is in the right. And this cannot be denied, without divesting Mankind of their rational Natures.

It is urged that *Matters of Faith* are not capable of such Evidence, as is necessary to lay a Foundation for *Knowledge or Certainty*.

‘ Every *Proposition*, saith our Author, (Pag. 11, 12.) or whatever can be objectively proposed to the Understandings of Men, as the Matter of their Assent or Dissent, must be Self-evident, Demonstrative or probable only’. — The Proposition in either of these [the two first mention’d] Cases will be NECESSARILY TRUE, and the contrary absolutely impossible in the Nature and Reason of Things. He adds, ‘ This intuitive and demonstrative Evidence is the sole Foundation of Knowledge or Certainty; and whatever comes short of this can amount only to Probability, and can lay a rational Foundation for no more than Opinion, Belief or Persuasion, in which, how high soever the Degrees of Probability may rise, we cannot conclude the thing to be NECESSARILY true, but the contrary will be still possible : There will be always this essential Difference between Certainty and Probability, Knowledge and Belief, or Opinion, that where there is the one, the thing must be NECESSARILY TRUE, whereas the other, still leaves the Matter in some Degree doubtful, and must always suppose the POSSIBILITY of the Contrary’.

Q. E. D.

UPON this Bottom it is, that he denies all Certainty in *Matters of Faith*, as not founded on Mathematical Evidence, but only on the suppos’d Testimony of GOD!

BUT there are several Faults in this Reasoning.

1. He confounds things *Certain*, with things absolutely *Necessary*; as if nothing were *infallibly Certain*, but the *contrary* must be absolutely *impossible* in the Nature and Reason of Things. Which is all one as if he should say, I am *certain* there is a Town called *Marlborough*, therefore it is utterly impossible, in the Nature and Reason of Things, it is a Contradiction to suppose, there should not be a Town *so* call'd. I know not whether this *Sceptick* be *certain* of his own Existence, but I can tell him it is no Contradiction to suppose he had never been born. And is this Man fit to set up for a *Censor*, who cannot distinguish between *Certainty* and *Necessity*? I freely own it were very possible there had never been a *supernatural Revelation*, or such a Book as the *Bible*; does it therefore follow that we cannot be infallibly certain that there is such a Book? But of this, it will be said, we have demonstrative Evidence. True; and therefore it follows, that *Certainty* does not always suppose the *Necessity* of the thing, or that the *contrary* should in the Nature and Reason of Things be absolutely impossible.

2. HE makes a total and absolute Distinction between Matters of Knowledge, and Matters of Faith; whereas these things are to be distinguished but in part. What is Matter of Faith in one respect, is Matter of Knowledge in another. The *Existence* and *Moral Attributes* of GOD, are Matters of Knowledge; But they are Matters of Faith also; and defin'd so to be: *Enoch, before he*

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was translated, had this Testimony that he pleased God: But without Faith it is impossible to please him: For he that cometh to God must BELIEVE that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him. The Truth of the Resurrection is an Object of Faith; but that this Proposition, the Dead shall be raised incorruptible, is contain'd in Scripture, is a Matter of Knowledge. In like manner, That Jesus Christ is the Great and True G O D, is an Article of Faith; and indeed the main Object of our Religion, as distinguish'd from all other Religions; so that he who rejects this Truth can scarce be called a Christian, in any other Sense than as a Jew might be called after the Name of Moses: But that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament shew him to be the most high God, over all Blessed for ever, is a Matter of Knowledge, and has been often demonstrated.

Now when any weak Protestant asserts, That in Cases of this Nature, there may be Certainty, where there is not Infallibility, he might, without Presumption, suppose himself speaking to Christians, who with that weak Man Mr. Chillingworth, (pag. 250.) heartily acknowledge and believe, that *'the Articles of our Faith are in themselves, Truths as certain and infallible, as the very common Principles of Geometry and Metaphysics'*; and who would readily conceive his Meaning to be, That tho' we are not absolutely infallible in our Judgments about Gospel Truth, and Error, we may nevertheless be Certain that *this* and the other Doctrine is revealed in Scripture; and that such and such Positions are contrary to the Faith once delivered

wered to the Saints. If this be acknowledg'd, (and I will venture to affirm, he is not a *Christian*, who denies it) It will necessarily follow, that there may be *Certainty in Matters of Faith*.

3. THIS Author is mistaken when he says, That there is no other Foundation of *Certainty*, but *intuitive*, or strict *Demonstrative Evidence*. All *Philosophers* and *Divines* are agreed, there is such a Thing as *Moral Certainty*, grounded on Moral Principles, and Traditional Evidence: And that this *Certainty* is real; and gives as *Rational* and undoubted an *Assurance* as a *Demonstration*. The main thing, it would seem, that sticks with this *Gentleman*, is, That we can have *no Certainty* that the Scripture is the *Word of God*; and consequently, that we cannot be *Certain* of any thing it reveals. And here I will acknowledge that, abstracting from the immediate Testimony of the Spirit of God, who can give what *kind* of Evidence he pleases to assure the Minds of Believers, (but which shall not be urg'd by me, in this place, lest I provoke a prophane Jeer) we have no *intuitive Evidence* that they are so; nor can the Divinity of the Scriptures, which might never have been, be demonstrated with the same kind of Mathematical Proof, with Propositions that depend not upon any arbitrary Constitution; as that the whole is equal to all its Parts; which is not only *certainly* but *necessarily* true, were there neither *whole* nor *parts* to which it might be applied. But it does not therefore follow that we can have no *real Certainty* concerning the Truth of the

the Christian Religion. For, considering the Moral Attributes of God; the Nature and Quality of the Doctrines revealed in the Gospel; the Precepts it enjoins; the Motives by which it persuades: The Harmony between the Scriptures of the *Old* and *New Testament*; the exact Accomplishment of Prophecies; the Attestation of Miracles, of the Reality of which we have all imaginable Security; especially the *Gift of Tongues*; in which there could be no possible Collusion, and being witness'd to by Friends, and Foes; confirms all the rest; the Voice of universal Tradition; the unanimous Suffrages of the Armies of *Martyrs* and *Confessors*, in the most distant Ages and Places; the permanent visible Effects of Christianity in the World; especially where it prevails in the Spirit and Power of it; and how weak and ridiculous all Objections against it are; I say, considering these, and many other Things that might be suggested, we may without being counted *Enthusiasts*, affirm that we have a *rational Certainty* of the Truth of the Christian Religion; and that to deny it, is to offer Violence to the eternal Rules of *Reason*, *Erudence*, and *Virtue*, in knowing and observing of which the Perfection of our Nature consists. Whether this be own'd to amount to a strict Mathematical Evidence or no, they must be wilfully blind, who will not grant it to be a *sufficient* Ground of a real, rational *Certainty*; such as determines the Mind as fully as a Demonstration can do, and excludes all rational Doubting.

UPON the whole, we may, I think, fairly conclude, that there may be *Certainty* in Matters of Faith, without having recourse to the *Enthusiastick Way*.

AND that in divers Respects. 1. We are morally *certain* of a Revealed Religion, and that the Scriptures are the *Word of God*. And if *Morality* is capable of a Demonstration, as Mr. Locke, and other Philosophers acknowledge, it may be demonstrated that the *Christian Religion* is not a *Cheat* or an *Imposture*, and that it is impossible the Scriptures should be a *Diabolical Illusion*, or a mere *human Invention*. I believe there are few *Protestants*, unless it be those of the coarsest Grain, who think (as our Author seems to do) that this Matter is left in *any Degree doubtful*. Nor is it a Contradiction to say, that others may be *sure* of what he only *supposes*. 2. We are *infallibly certain*, that it is our *Duty* to believe the Gospel; and that upon the Principles of right Reason, and common Sense. 3. We have an *infallible Assurance* that the Book which we call the *Bible* contains certain Propositions, both *Doctrinal* and *Practical*: As that the *Decalogue* is written in the Law of *Moses*; that *St. John* begins his Gospel, with a Declaration of the Divinity of the *Word*, or *Logos*; that the *Evangelists* have given us a History of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of *JESUS CHRIST*; that he is stiled *GOD*, and our *Saviour*, who shall judge the Quick and the Dead, &c. 4. We may be *certain* that in some things we understand the Mind of *GOD truly*. This we gather from the
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Nature of our own Souls, and from the End of a Revelation. To deny it, is to blaspheme God and Man. It is a Contradiction to the Nature of God, to suppose that he has given to Men a supernatural Discovery of his Will, which they are to receive on Pain of his eternal Displeasure; and yet that he has not afforded them *certain Means* by which they may *certainly* know what he would have them believe and do, in order to their eternal Happiness. Such a Supposition divests Man also of his rational Nature. For no Argument can be brought to prove that we can have no *Certainty* concerning the *determinate Sense* of plain Scriptural Propositions, but will prove, at the same time, that we cannot be *certain* of the Meaning of any Proposition that can be spoken or written. Unless we will suppose, that the whole *Bible*, from *Genesis* to the *Revelation*, is a mere jumble of unintelligible Words, that can convey no certain *Ideas* or *Truths* to our Understandings. Turn it which way you will, and the *Consequence* will be, either that we are not capable of *Knowledge* and *Certainty* at all, no, not in Matters of *Science*; or, that G O D hath *spoken* to us in such an *obscure* manner, that we cannot, with the utmost Application of our own Faculties, the most uncorrupted Desires and Searches after Truth, and most earnest Prayers to G O D, that he would divest our Minds of all Prejudice, and illumine them with the Knowledge of his Will; be fully *certify'd* concerning any of those Doctrines that integrate Christianity, and in the Belief and Reception of which our eternal Salvation is most

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nearly concern'd. A Supposition that no Christian can think of without Horror.

I would not be understood, as if I suppos'd it necessary to the Salvation of every Christian, to *conceive* himself infallibly certain of the Truth of all those Doctrines he is bound to believe. The Apostles pray'd, *Lord encrease our Faith*. S. Paul says, *We know but in part*. And a Faith of *Adherence* will carry a Man safe to Heaven, with many *involuntary* Doubts and Fears about him. But we may as well renounce our *Bibles*, and our *Understandings*, (not to mention the internal Testimony of the Spirit of God; That *Unction* which Believers receive from the *Holy one*: which Celestial Donative is a certain Guide into all necessary Truth, and a sure Preservative against damnable Errors,) as yeild that we cannot *certainly* know or understand any Part of God's revealed Will. We have the same Assurance here, as we have that we apprehend one anothers Meaning, when we speak most plainly, and most pertinently. I would ask, Did the great Author of Revelation design that he should be understood by fallible Creatures? If not, what serves a Revelation for? Was it given only to amuse Mankind; or to set them together by the Ears about the Sense of unintelligible Sounds? Such a Thought can never find Entertainment in the Mind of one who is *certain* that there is a G O D. We must therefore conclude, that G O D did intend he should be understood, especially in things of the greatest and most universal Concern. It will then unavoidably follow,

follow, that he has made use of such Expressions as were suited to convey a *certain determinate Sense* to our Understandings; and consequently that there may be *actual Certainty* in Matters of Faith, where there is not the Privilege of an *absolute Infallibility*. ‘* *Tho’ we pretend not, says Mr. Chillingworth, to certain Means of not erring in interpreting ALL Scripture, particularly such places as are obscure and ambiguous; yet this is no Impediment but that we may have certain Means of not erring in and about the Sense of those places which are plain and clear.--- If you ask me, How I can be SURE that I know the Meaning of those places? I ask you again, can you be SURE, that you understand what I, or any Man else says? They that heard our Saviour and the Apostles preach, could they have sufficient Assurance that they understood at any time, what they would have them do? If not, to what End did they hear them? If they could, why may we not be as well assured that we understand sufficiently what we conceive plain in their Writings? Either therefore God has not revealed his Councils to Mankind, in things that concern their eternal Salvation, with that Simplicity and Plainness, in which an honest Man would speak his Thoughts to another, in a Matter of great Importance; otherwise, it must be acknowledged, that we may be Certain that in some things we understand his Mind Truly. And consequently, that there is, and may be, actual Certainty in Matters of Faith. No Reason can be assign’d to the contrary, but what will re-*

* *The Religion of Protestants, &c. Pag. 85. Edit. 51*

flect the greatest Dishonour upon GOD, destroy the *Usefulness* of a Revelation, and divest Man of a Capacity of knowing *Certainly* that he knows any thing. But,

IV. *Fourthly*, To return from this necessary *Digression* to what gave occasion to it. You will easily apprehend, Sir, the Relation, the Argument between us, bears to what has been offered on this *Head*. I have already hinted, that your *Objection* drawn from the *Fallibility* of *human Reasoning*, is every whit as strong against all *Certainty* in Matters of Faith, as it is against the *Certainty* of plain Scripture-Consequences. And I may now the more freely press your Plea with that dead Weight, that I have vindicated the Claim of *Certainty*, even where there is not *Infallibility*; and showed the absurd Consequences of denying it. For tho' I do not charge you with holding those Consequences, yet if I understand your Argument against me, it is as full of them as an Egg is full of Meat. If because there is a Mixture of the Reasoning of fallible Men in drawing Inferences from Scripture, we cannot be *Certain*, that they are true in themselves, or that they necessarily result from Scripture-Principles, and so have *Authority* to determine our Faith; it is evident that there can be no *Certainty* of Faith at all. We cannot be *Certain* that the *Scriptures* are the Word of God, or that we understand the Words in which they were written, or that we *rightly* apprehend the real Sense of the HOLY GHOST, in any one Point of Doctrine, how necessary soever it is declared to be; since there

is equally a Mixture of human Reasoning in satisfying ourselves concerning those Matters, as in drawing evident Conclusions from Scripture-Principles. It belongs properly to *Reason* to judge of the *Evidences* of a Revelation; or whether what is traditionally proposed to us under that *Name*, be of a divine Original or no; and to judge of the *Signification* of the Words wherein it is delivered; and consequently, *what* Doctrines or Propositions it contains. If you deny this, I must confess myself the most unfit Man in the World to deal with you. * Nor can you grant it, without owning that we may with the *same Security and Certainty*

* Not that I am of their Mind, who make their own Reason the Sovereign Judge of supernatural Verities; so as to think themselves oblig'd to believe nothing to be true, but what their Understandings are able to comprehend; on the contrary, I own with Mr. Chillingworth, (Pag. 244,) that I am bound to believe the Truth of *divers Articles of Faith, the Manner whereof is obscure, and to human Understandings incomprehensible*: Allowing with him also, that it is not the obscure incomprehensible Manner of these Things, which we are bound to believe; but the *Truth* of them. For Instance, That these Three, FATHER, SON and HOLY GHOST, are one GOD, the same in Substance or Essence, equal in Power and Glory; is an Article of Faith, the Truth of which I am bound to believe, upon the Testimony of GOD; (which is an infallible Principle of Truth and Certainty.) But how these Three subsist distinctly in the same numerical Essence, or the *Manner* of their personal Subsistence in the same common Nature; this is what I am not bound to believe, or not believe, or to employ one Thought about it, because it is not revealed, and therefore incomprehensible. In this Sense we can justify our believing Mysterious Propositions against all the Cavils of prophane Infidels, who sport themselves with their own Deceptions; when they compare believing of Mysteries, or things above Reason to comprehend, with *seeing Things which are out of Sight*. As if a blind Man were not, in Reason, oblig'd to believe that other Men have Eye-Sight, and

can discern and describe Objects at a distance, because he has no Notion of *Sight* or *Light*. Or, as if we were not obliged to believe that Man is a Being compounded of Soul and Body, because we cannot comprehend the Modus of that Composition, or Union between those different Natures; nor the Manner how our Souls and Bodies do mutually affect one another. Or, as if we were not obliged to believe the Reality of *Motion*, because in our Reasoning about it, it appears to involve the Contradiction of a Body's being in two distant Places in the same instant of Time. Or, as if we were not obliged to believe that there is a God, and that this God is Eternal, Infinite, Almighty, &c. because we can have no adequate IDEA of Eternity, Infinity, &c. and because (as a just Reproof to those vain or empty Men, who pretend to limit God, and bring him down to the Level of their own Understandings) we are told, that none can by searching find out God, none can find out the Almighty unto Perfection.

It is one thing to say, that we ought to believe the TRUTH of Articles of Faith, the Manner of which is incomprehensible, and unrevealed; and another thing to say, that we ought to believe THAT unrevealed incomprehensible Manner. If any will assert this last, let him even pass for a *Visionary*. If the former be granted, then Mysteries Doctrines are proper Objects of Faith: that is, we are to believe the Truth of them, tho' they contain some things which we know but very imperfectly, and other Things belong to them which our Understandings cannot reach. So that in some things, and in some Respects, we must necessarily raise our Faith above our Understanding; unless we will confound believing of things, upon a divine Authority, with apprehending the Manner of them. We believe that the Worlds were framed by the WORD of God, so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear; or that God made all things of NOTHING; but who can tell the Manner of this wonderful Work? God being a Spirit, we believe he thinks and acts, and that in the most perfect Manner; but HOW he thinks and acts he must be void of Understanding who shall pretend to know. If it be said that we are not bound to believe how God thinks and acts, or how he created all things of Nothing; I readily grant it. Neither are we bound to believe the Manner how three Divine Persons subsist in the Unity of the Godhead, or in the same Divine Essence. What we insist upon is, the Truth of the Doctrine, that these Three do subsist in the same Infinite Essence, (which were not Infinite if we could comprehend it) and that they partake of the same Infinite and Adorable Perfection and Attributes, as Eternity, necessary Existence, Independency, Immutability, &c. This we are bound to believe, on the Veracity of GOD, tho' we cannot understand the Manner of such their Personal Subsistence, &c. Yea, tho' it seem contrary to our common Conceptions of other Things:

tainty build our Faith on *Scripture-Consequences*, as on the most formal Passages, or the *primary Truths* from which they are derived. For our Reason is as much exercis'd about *what* is a divine Revelation, (unless we believe *implicitly*) as it is about what is a *Consequence* from Scripture. Our Reason is as much a judge, *what* is the *Signification* of the Words of Scripture, and *what* Propositions, or *primary Truths* it contains, as it is, *what Consequences* justly flow from them.

So Things: As we are bound to believe that God *Thinks* and *Acts*, tho' we cannot tell *how*; and we find invincible Difficulties in determining whether his *Acts* be the same with his *Essence*, or distinct from it.

This leads me to observe, That we are bound to yield to Revelation in Things not only *above Reason*, but even *contrary* to its probable Opinions or Conjectures. For where the thing is only *probable* to Reason, the *contrary* may be possible in the Nature and Reason of Things; and in that Case a clear Revelation determines the Matter. The same will hold where there are insuperable Difficulties on both Sides of a Question: As whether there is a *Vacuum* or no; or whether *Matter* be divisible in *Infinitum* or no; Here, had God seen fit, a Revelation would put an End to all Controversies, and discover on which side the Question the Truth lies: It is therefore no just Prejudice against the generally receiv'd DOCTRINE of the TRINITY, that there are Difficulties attending it, which are insuperable to our Understandings; or that it seems contrary to our common Notions in other Things. Since as Mr. Locke himself acknowledges, 'Revelation ought to determine our Assent even against Probability'. And it is evident that as great Difficulties arise out of the acknowledg'd Principles of Natural Religion. When God condescends to give us a Revelation it becomes us to submit to it. Nor can they be freed from the Guilt of *Sacrilege*, who wrest his Words from their most natural, most obvious, and most common Sense, to a Meaning more agreeable to their own prejudicate Opinions: And this lest they should be thought so mean spirited as to give up their Understandings, *in Compliment*, to that God who made them. Vain Man would be wise, tho' Man be born like a wild Asses Colt.

So that if it must weaken the Force of a natural and necessary Consequence from plain Scriptural Propositions, that there is a Mixture of the Reasoning of fallible Men in the Collection of them; it must weaken the Force of a traditional Revelation, that there is not only a Mixture, but an entire Composition of human Reasoning, (if I may so express myself) in determining whether it be a divine Revelation or no. And it must weaken the Force of Scripture-Promises, Precepts, and doctrinal Truths, that we cannot, without a Mixture of human Reasoning, search out, or apprehend the Meaning of them. If we admit of a Certainty in either of these Instances, we must, whether we will or no, admit of an equal Degree of Certainty in deducing plain Consequences from Scripture. And what must we do in this Case? We must either own that just and lawful Consequences from Scripture are a Certain Ground of Faith; or reduce all things to a wild Uncertainty, unhinge the Faith of Christians, and render it impossible for them to be fully assured, or certify'd of any thing; no, not of that one Article of Faith, which even the Socinians seem willing to leave to them, viz. the divine Authority and Original of the Scriptures themselves.

V. Fifthly. This may be also urged with respect to Translations, The Scriptures were design'd for Men of all Nations and Languages; and, as you observe, 'to make the most Illiterate, as well as the most Learned wise unto Salvation'. It follows then that the Illiterate are furnish'd with Certain Means

Means of attaining to the Knowledge of the *revealed* Counsels of God. And yet these very *Scriptures* were originally delivered in *Languages* which the Generality of Men understand nothing of. Nor will it be denied that *Translations* are the Works of *fallible* Men, in which they exercise their own Reason, as much as in drawing plain *Consequences* from plain Propositions. Shall we therefore say, That the Faith of the *unlearned* relies on *uncertain Grounds*; or that *Translations* have not sufficient *Force* and Authority, *divine* Authority, to determine and command their Assent?

THIS puts me in Mind of a Passage in the *first Part* of the *REPLY* of your Committee †; (of which I am inform'd you are one,) *Pag* 24. The Committee allows 'that the Words of any Translation of Scripture are not of divine Inspiration'. They are then the Words of *fallible* Men, or Men liable to err. Must it therefore follow that an *Honest English Man*, who is ignorant of *Greek* and *Hebrew*, has not so good a Foundation for his Faith, as a Man skilled in those *Languages*? The *Septuagint* was a *Translation* of the *Hebrew* Scriptures; and yet in our Saviour's Time, it was perhaps more used than the very *Original*; and the inspired Pen-Men of the *New-Testament* quoted

† *Reply to the SUBSCRIBING Ministers REASONS, in their Vindication for declaring their Faith at this critical juncture; and in other than express Scripture Words. Published by Agreement of a Committee of the NON-SUBSCRIBING Ministers.*

out of it, and regarded it as a *Divine Revelation*, tho' the Justness of it depended on the Skill and Honesty of *uninspired* Translators. The Committee proceeds; 'and therefore we never pretended to set up *the Words of Translations any further than as they could be proved to have the same Signification with the Words of the original Text*'. And can this be done without a *Mixture of the Reasoning of fallible Men*, and making of *Judgments*, both on *Words and Things*?

I would here ask; can it be prov'd that any *Version* is so far agreed with the *Originals*, that Men may safely depend on it, as a *Divine Revelation*? Can this be prov'd to the Conviction of one who knows not the *Original Tongues*? Can it be prov'd with such convincing Evidence as to leave those without *Excuse*, who being ignorant of the learned *Languages*, should reject all *Translations* of the *Bible*, as *Composures of fallible Men*, on which they could not rely as a Rule of Faith, or a *Standard of Truth*? If not, then there is an End of the *Faith* among the *Unlearned*; the greatest part of *Christians* have not whereon to rest the Soles of their Feet; they have no *Security* but that their *Faith stands in the Wisdom or Folly, of Men*, instead of the *infallible Truths of God*: And our Blessed *L O R D*, tho' he design'd that his Gospel should be preach'd to all *Nations, Tribes, and Languages* under the Cope of Heaven, has yet provided a *Certain Rule*, only for those who understand one or two *Languages* in which the *Scriptures* were originally written. The Consequence of which must be, that the generality of

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kind are not obliged to receive the *Gospel* as a *divine Revelation*, when brought unto them in their *Vulgar* Tongues ; or, that in order thereunto it must be their Duty to study *Greek* and *Hebrew*. Nor can this be prov'd their Duty, until they are convinc'd, it is their Duty to believe, that there is a *divine Revelation* in those Languages ; which is impossible upon the Supposition laid down. But if on the contrary, Men may with *Certainty* build their Faith and Hopes of Salvation on the *Word of God* as convey'd to them in *Translations* made by *fallible* Men ; if this can be prov'd the Duty of those who know not the *Originals* ; if it can be prov'd either to the *just* Conviction, or Condemnation of *such*, that there is a *divine Revelation*, and that *Translations* have (in things of the greatest Importance) the *same* Signification with their *Originals*, and carry in them a Doctrine of *divine Inspiration*, such as commands their Obedience in the *Name* and by the *Authority* of *God* ; it inevitably follows that we must be determin'd by *just* and *lawful* Conclusions from certain Principles, in settling what is of the greatest Importance in Religion. And if we cannot without the use of our own rational Faculties, and raising of *Inferences*, determine what the *Word of God* is relative to us, and if these *Inferences* lose nothing of their binding Force upon Conscience, for being Reasonings of *fallible* Men, why should a *Mixture of such Reasoning* enervate the Force of manifest and necessary Conclusions from plain Scripture Premises? In a Word, we must either depend upon these as *certainly true*,

or be altogether *uncertain* what it is, G O D would have us believe and do, that we may be sav'd.

B U T to follow the *Committee* in the place refer'd to, ' *Is there not a vast Difference betwixt human Words, as imploy'd in a literal and exact Translation of the Words of the Holy Ghost ; and human Words imploy'd to convey the SENSE which SOME MEN have had of the very Doctrines and Truths themselves, revealed by the Holy Ghost ?* ' What Sense some Men may have had of these Doctrines, as *Arians*, *Socinians*, or even the *New-Methodists*, we are not concern'd in; nor can we help it, if this was intended as a *Reflection* on the *Article* and * *Answers* subscrib'd by most of the *LONDON Pastors*, as a Testimony of their firm Adherence to the *Catholic Faith*. The *Gentlemen* of the *Committee* are at Liberty to think of these Propositions as they please ; only, let them not take it ill if we think ourselves *very sure* that they are found in, and founded on Scripture, and signify no more than what is written there with the Beams of the Sun. But if we state this Matter aright, there is *no Difference*, in point of *Certainty*, betwixt human Words as imploy'd in a *Translation*, and as imploy'd in conveying the *Sense* of Scripture. In other Respects there is a Difference, the former being an Interpretation of *Words*, the latter of *Things*. But with Respect to *Certainty*, they are

* The first Article of the CHURCH of ENGLAND; and the Answers to the Fifth and Sixth Questions of the ASSEMBLY'S CATECHISM.

upon a Level. The Words are equally human, and there a *Mixture of human Reasoning*, whether in *Metaphrastical*, or *Exegetical* Interpretations. Nor has the *Translator* a better Claim to *Infallibility*, than the Man who *conceives*, and expresses in his own *Words*, what he *conceives* to be the *Sense* of the HOLY GHOST.

UPON the whole, therefore, if there can be no *Certainty* in extracting the *Sense* of Scripture, or in raising of *Consequences* from it, there can be none in the *Versions* of *uninspired* Men. We may be *equally assured* that we rightly apprehend the true Meaning of plain Scriptural Propositions, and what they *imply*, as we are that we perfectly understand the *Language* in which they are delivered. So that whether we speak of the *Evidences* of reveal'd Religion, or the *Meaning* of Scripture Declarations, or the *Signification* of Words, we have no farther *Security* concerning any of *these*, than we have about evident *Conclusions* from Scripture-Principles. And which way soever we turn ourselves, we are reduc'd to the Necessity of denying all *Certainty* in Matters of Faith, (which, if I mistake not, is to *nullify* the *Faith*) or of acknowledging that we may be *Certain*, infallibly certain, that such and such *Consequences* naturally and necessarily arise out of such and such *Principles*; and that we must either renounce the *Principles themselves*, or be *determined* by the *Conclusions* which manifestly result from them.

VI. *Sixthly*, It may be farther observ'd, that if we deny all *Certainty* of human Reasoning, in its

86 A DISSERTATION *concerning*

its clear *Deductions* from Scripture; if *these* are not as obligatory upon Conscience, as the most express Declarations, for *this* Reason, because in yielding to them, the Mind must be led by *Argument* and *Discourse*; if *this* be a warrantable Plea for refusing to own such Doctrines as Articles of Faith, which are demonstrated only by Scripture-Consequences; then there can be no *Certainty* about, or Reason to believe any Thing, even in Natural Religion itself. And the *Creed* of a *Deist*, will be as very a *precarious* a Thing, as the *Faith* of a *Christian*; or, that called the Apostles *Creed*. That there is a *GOD*; That he made us; that we are bound to fear and worship him; that his Providence rules the World; that he concerns himself in the Moral Government of Intelligent Beings; That our Souls are of a spiritual, immortal Nature, and shall out live the Dissolution of our Bodies; or, that there will be a State of Rewards and Punishments after this Life; are Notions which we come at through a whole Chain of *Inferences*; nor can we have any greater *Certainty* of the Truth of these, (nor therefore more Reason to believe them) than of the *Lawfulness* of some Consequences from plain Scriptural Propositions.

I cannot therefore but conclude, that the Plea of adhering to the express Words of Scripture *only*, and declining the Authority of *Scripture-Consequences* in Matters of Faith, for this Reason, that we cannot be certain that such Consequences are infallibly true, or in your Words, *because there is a Mixture of the Reasoning of fallible Men in the Collection*

lection of them; is a Method most dangerous to Religion, and which directly tends through *Scepticism*, to *Infidelity* and *Atheism*.

VII. *Seventhly*, What you offer by way of Illustration, from the Case of Assurance about our own Interest in the Blessings of the Covenant, is not a Parallel with Consequences drawn from Scripture-Premises only; as will appear by putting it into Form:

Whosoever repenteth and believeth, shall be saved, or obtain Remission of Sins.

But I do repent and believe,

Therefore I shall be saved, or my Sins are pardoned.

In this Argument the first Proposition only, is Scripture; the second, on which according to all the Rules of Logick, the Stress of the Conclusion must lie, is not Scripture, but depends on my own Sense and Experience of Things. There cannot therefore be an equal Certainty here, as where the Consequence is deduc'd from Premises entirely Scriptural, as thus,

He that made all Things is GOD.

Jesus Christ is He that made all Things,

Therefore, Jesus Christ is GOD.

Or thus,

There is but one GOD,

The FATHER is GOD, the SON is

GOD, the HOLY GHOST is GOD.

Therefore these Three are one GOD.

Taking

Taking the Word GOD in the second Branch of this *Discourse*, in the same Sense and Eminence in which it is understood in the *first*, the *Consequence* will be as unavoidable as what follows ;

Omnis homo est Ens rationale,

Dominus Evanus est homo,

Ergo, Dominus Evanus est Ens rationale.

If I have rendered the *Name* wrong, or if there be a *Mixture of human Reasoning* in this *trivial Argument*, I hope it will not weaken the *Force* of the *Conclusion*.

I own that where one of the *Premises* only is *Scripture*, the *Conclusion* may be an *Object of Faith*;

He who intercedes for one or more Persons, with ANOTHER, is *Personally distinguish'd* from that OTHER with whom he intercedes ; But, JESUS CHRIST is our *Advocate*, or *Intercedes for us*, with the FATHER, Therefore, JESUS CHRIST is *personally distinguish'd from the FATHER*.

Here, of the *Premises*, the *Minor* only is taken out of *Scripture* ; the *Major* is *Scientifical*, or founded on the *Reason of Things* ; and yet the *Conclusion* may be truly called a *Scripture-Revelation*, and is of *Faith*.

BUT where both the *Premises* are *Scripture-Propositions*, the *Conclusion* that naturally springs from them, is indubitably *Divine*. Thus if the *Minor* of the first *Syllogism*, *I do repent and believe*, were a *Scripture-Principle*, as the *Major* is, the *Conclusion*, that therefore, *my Sins are pardoned*, would be as infallibly true, as evident, and as much

a Matter of divine Revelation, as it is that *whoever believeth shall be saved*. Yea, if it were self-evident or demonstrable to natural Reason, as the *Major* in the last *Syllogism* is, or if it were truly witness'd to by the internal Testimony of the Spirit of God, the Conclusion would be an undoubted divine Truth. And those *Divines*, who, as *you* observe, made it of the Essence of saving Faith, to believe that our Sins are pardon'd; must, to be consistent with themselves, suppose, that there could be no *saving Faith*, without the *Testimony* of the Spirit of God actually witnessing thereto. In which Case the *Minor* in the first *Syllogism*, would be founded on the same Principle of Truth with the *Major*, and the *Conclusion* an Object of Faith. We believe this Proposition, *He that believeth shall be saved*, upon the Testimony of God in his Word: If therefore, I have the same real Testimony in whatever Way applied, witnessing that I do believe; the *Inference*, that therefore I shall be saved, is as much the Matter of my Faith, as it is that *whoever believeth shall be saved*. But still, this supposes that I have as good Reason to believe, it is the Spirit of God that testify's to the Truth and Sincerity of my Faith, as I have to believe that the *Scriptures* are the Word of God. The want of such distinguishing and over-bearing Evidence here, is the Reason why many who are endued with a *saving Faith*, and regard the Promises as infallibly true, dare not with the same Certainty pronounce their actual Interest in the Blessings of the Covenant. Yet this hinders not but that the Spirit of God can seal such a Testimony

timony to Believers, when he sees fit, as gives an infallible *Assurance*, and excludes all possible Deception.

HAVING thus, Sir, considered your grand *Objection* in every *Light* and *Shade* in which I could place it ; I am still of Opinion, That *manifest and necessary Consequences of plain Scriptural Propositions, are as much a divine Revelation, and so to be regarded as the Principles from which they naturally and necessarily flow.* And from what hath been said in Defence of this general Principle, I will venture to deduce this

COROLLARY.

That an ASSENT given to plain Scripture-Consequences, is truly a divine Faith ; a Faith founded, not on the Authority of fallible Men, but on the Word of God.

IT is possible a Man may assent to the express Words of Scripture, and yet his Faith not be morally divine. This is the Case with those whose Assent bears no immediate Respect to the Authority of GOD, but is absolutely govern'd by the Authority of Men, without Knowledge, Understanding or Consideration of any higher Reason or Ground of their Belief. Tho' what they believe may be a Truth of God, yet the Motives
and

and Grounds of their Belief being altogether human, their Faith is not morally Divine. That is truly a divine Faith, which relies upon, is directed and determin'd by, and bears an immediate conscious Respect to a divine Revelation, whatever the Manner of its Conveyance be. Now, the same Arguments that prove *just Consequences* from Scripture, to be, *as to the Matter of them*, a divine Revelation, do also prove that an Assent govern'd by such Consequences is a Divine Faith.

CONCERNING this, I remember not that you have said any thing expressly in your *Letter*. Yet from your Reasoning in some parts of it, you seem agreed with the Author of the *Occasional Paper*, who, as hath been already remark'd, will have all Consequences from Scripture to be always distinguish'd from the Authority of the Holy Scriptures themselves; and will not allow they ever can have Authority to determine Men's Faith. And that because, as you word it, *there is a Mixture of the Reasoning of fallible Men in the Collection of them*. But if notwithstanding this, they are in themselves certainly true, and a part of Revelation, and if we have the same Security about them, as we have that we understand the *Words of Scripture*, all which is either granted by you, or prov'd by me, it must needs follow that an Assent given to them under that Modification, is *as much* a divine Faith, as an Assent given to the *express Words of Scripture*, with respect to any determinate Meaning: Since it is demonstrable that we have

no surer a Way to ascertain ourselves of the Sense of *these*, than we have to ascertain ourselves of the Truth and Lawfulness of Scripture-Consequences.

HERE the *Stress* of the *Assent* is not laid upon any *human Decision*, as the formal Reason of it; but the human Mind is concluded and *determined*, by what it plainly perceives to be already *decided* by the *Holy Ghost* in his Word. Men must exercise their Reason in drawing of Consequences, as well as in finding out the Sense of Scripture Words, but this hinders not why the Assent may not be *alike Divine* in both Cases. The Faith I give in a Scripture-Consequence, no more depends on the *Act* of my Mind in deducing it, than my Faith in what is *expressly* said, depends on the *Act* of my Mind in conceiving what is *Meant*; which in many Instances I cannot do by a *simple Apprehension*, without *Logical Discourse*; of which the most illiterate are capable. In either Case my Faith is determin'd by the *Authority* of Scripture; and the *Act* of my Mind, or the *Act* of *Ratiocination*, is only instrumental towards the forming my Faith.

THE *New-Methodists* will not, I suppose, deny the Instrumentality of their *Senses*, in determining what is Matter of Faith to them; for *Faith comes by hearing*. Does it therefore follow that their Faith hangs loosely on their *Ears*? This seems to have been the Case with those *Fanatical Scepticks*,

Scepticks, † who said if we have but the Words of Scripture, we are not concern'd with the Sense of it. Which mad Principle they ground'd on this Plea, That all Scripture being given by Inspiration, it was not lawful for Men not inspir'd to interpret it: And that without an immediate Revelation no Man could be sure of the Sense of the Holy Ghost. In Consequence of this they oppugn'd the Ministry as an Usurpation, and denied all Certainty in Matters of Faith, because all Men were alike fallible in their Interpretations and Deductions. How far the Opinions lately broach'd, agree with this exploded Fanaticism, needs not be suggested to the intelligent Reader. But if it be absurd to resolve a Man's Faith into the Authority of his Senses, because they are Mediums, to convey the Truths of God to his Understanding; it must needs be a fallacious Way of arguing, to resolve the Faith given to Scripture-Consequences into human Authority, because there is a Necessity of exercising that Reason which God hath given us, both in discussing what the Sense of Scripture is, and what Inferences result from it.

AND therefore I should be glad to know what the Gentlemen of your Committee mean, when in the first Part of their Reply, Pag. 13. Speaking of the Declaration of Faith made by the SUBSCRIBING Ministers, they signify their Grief that they [the Subscribers] "should meet with People of such

† Vid. D. Owen, de Script. Interpret. Exercit. 2.

“ *Thoughts or Tempers, as to require a Satisfaction*
 “ *in that way ; [of a free and open Declaration of*
 “ *their Faith, in other than Scripture Words] or*
 “ *that they [the Subscribers] should think that any*
 “ *who are preserved by such HUMAN DECLARATIONS**, ARE HEREIN PLEASING TO
 “ *GOD, or endued with a DIVINE and SAVING*
 “ *FAITH?* If they intend only by this, that if any are preserv'd from Error, merely by the *Authority* of our *Subscription*, or, resolve their *Belief* of the *Doctrine* subscribed by us, into our *declaring* for it, and not into the *Scripture-Evidence* of Truth, they do not herein quit themselves like Men ; we are ready to say the same thing, even tho' our *Declaration* had been in *Scripture-Terms*. And we might very justly propose the *Satisfaction* of some, and the *Preservation* of others who attend on our *Ministry*, without once imagining that any of them were so void of Understanding, as to found their *Belief* upon the *Credit* of our *Testimony*. But if they mean that a *Faith* governed by the Propositions *subscribed* by us, cannot be acceptable to GOD, or a *Faith* truly *Divine*, as would seem from the *Opposition* they make between *Such humane Declarations, humane Forms, and a divine and saving Faith* ; we must in this beg leave to differ from them ; and that for this very good Reason, That *just and lawful Consequences* from *Scripture*, are to be regarded as *Scripture-Revelations*, and what the Words of God

* As the first Article of the CHURCH of ENGLAND, and fifth and sixth Answers of the ASSEMBLIES CATECHISM.

import by a necessary Deduction, is as much the Mind of God, as the Words themselves.

It is an easy Matter to brand a Declaration of Faith, with the Names of *Unscriptural, Humane Forms, Humane Declarations, HUMANE DECISIONS*, and *Explications of fallible Men*; and to distinguish it absolutely from Scripture. But when they apply these Epithets to the Article and Answers referred to in the Margin, and that without any Qualification or Restriction, as if they were altogether Humane; we have a Right to demand of them, Whether they own that these Propositions are just and lawful Consequences from Scripture, or no? Or, whether they believe that they contain the real Sense of Scripture, or no? If they do not, then they talk consistently in loading them with the Names of *Unscriptural, Humane, &c.* And contradict themselves only in professing an Agreement with the subscribing Ministers. But if they do indeed believe and acknowledge, that the Article and Answers do truly express the Sense of the Holy Ghost, or that they are necessary Deductions from Scripture-Principles; then they are right in professing an Agreement with us; and only contradict themselves, when they call our Declaration of Faith, a HUMANE DECISION. For these Words, the Sense of Scripture, and a Humane Decision, or, manifest and necessary Consequences from Scripture, and Humane Determinations, are as opposite as, Scripture and no Scripture. This your Committee cannot deny without another Contradiction. “No doubt (say they*) the Sense of

* Reply, part I. pag. 18.

Scripture,

‘ *Scripture, and not the Sound of Words, is Scripture* ; And pag. 24. ‘ *Whatever Words truly express the Sense of the Holy Ghost, we readily allow to carry in them a Doctrine of Divine Inspiration, and the contrary to it must be accounted a dangerous Error* : If so, then Propositions which truly express the *Sense of Scripture*, or of the *Holy Ghost*, and contain a *Doctrine of Divine Inspiration*, must be distinguish’d from *Humane Decisions* ; Otherwise, *Scripture* is not *Scripture*, or, the *Sense of Scripture*, and *Humane Decisions* must be Words of the same Meaning, that is, *Humane Decisions* are not *Humane Decisions*.

It were to be wish’d the *Gentlemen* of the *Committee* would come out of the *Clouds*. We could easily pass over many *Contradictions*, if they would but tell us in plain *Terms*, *What they think of our Declaration of Faith*. It truly expresses the *Sense of the Holy Ghost*, or it does not ? These being *Terms of immediate Contradiction*, they must either *affirm*, or *deny*, or profess themselves *doubtful* about it. If our *Brethren* are *doubtful* as to this *Point*, they ought not *definitively* to pronounce, that our *Declaration* is a *Humane Decision* ; since for ought they know it may be the very *Decision of the Holy Ghost* : Nor ought they to profess that they are agreed with the *subscribing Ministers*, or the *Reformed Churches*, in their *Sentiments concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity* ; since *These* do unanimously profess that they believe our *Declaration to be the Doctrine of the Blessed TRINITY, revealed in the HOLY SCRIPTURES*. If they *deny* ; when they tell us so, we cannot

cannot be at a loss where to join Issue with them; and some, no doubt, will do their best Offices to convince them of the Truth, or shew themselves open to Conviction from them: But then let them not take it ill, if we suppose they differ from us, and from all the *Reformed Churches*. If they affirm, or own that our Declaration truly expresses the Sense of the Holy Ghost, and signifies no more than what the Words of Scripture necessarily import; then let them qualify their Epithets of Unscriptural, Human, &c. And confess to GOD and Man, that what they called a Human Decision, is a Doctrine of DIVINE INSPIRATION; and consequently, that they who are preserv'd by it from the contrary dangerous Error, may herein be pleasing to God, and endued with a DIVINE and SAVING FAITH.

BUT if in a Matter of this Importance, as whether in the Unity of the Godhead, there be three Persons, of one Substance, Power, and Eternity; the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST? I say, if in a Matter of this vast Consequence, they will neither affirm, nor deny, nor profess themselves doubtful; let them say they will do neither, or forever hold their Tongues. To return,

IF a Persuasion founded on Scripture-Consequences cannot be a Divine Faith, because there is a Mixture of humane Reasoning in the Collection of them; there can be no such Thing as a Divine Faith, relative to any determinate Sense of Scripture, without an immediate Revelation concerning that Sense. Because no Man can give a Rational Assent to the Declarations of Scripture, but he must exercise

his *Reason* about them, and, by *Reasoning*, endeavour to discern the *Evidence* of their being from God, and *what* Truths or Doctrines they signify. But if notwithstanding this Exercise of Reason, about the Meaning and Evidence of what God hath expressly declared, the Belief of these Declarations is a *Divine Faith*, and founded on a *Divine Authority*; the same may be said of that Faith which is *directed* and *determin'd* by just and lawful Consequences from Scripture. Had the *Saducees* believed a *Resurrection* upon the Evidence of that Oracle, *I am the God of the Patriarchs*; they had herein been endued with a *Divine Faith*, a Faith *pleasing* to God, and *determin'd* by the Authority of his Word; tho' according to you, it be a *remote Consequence*. And he who, upon a like Evidence of Scripture, believes, *That these three are one God*, yet *distinguish'd* by demonstrative *Personal Pronouns*, *Characters*, and *Actions*; (as the *Evidence* here is much fuller and plainer, and the *Consequence* of a much more easy Deduction from innumerable Declarations of Scripture, than in the above mention'd Case;) has as much a *divine Faith*, as if the Proposition, *There are three Persons in the Godhead*, &c. were in so many *Letters* and *Syllables* found written in the sacred *Text*.



CHAP. V.

The Consistency of this Doctrine with the PERFECTION of Scripture, and the End of a Revelation, vindicated; with brief Remarks on the CHARGE of obscuring the Doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture, exhibited against the SUBSCRIBING Ministers; and the Charge itself, more justly, retorted.

IF by what you say, under your next Head of *Distinctions* (from Pag. 12.) of the *Perfection* and *End* of a divine Revelation, you mean no more; than that all Things *necessary* to Salvation, are *fully* and *plainly* revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and may be gathered from thence by all, whether *learned* or *unlearned*, who, with a due Preparation of Mind, and diligent use of appointed Means, enquire into them: This is no more than what well agrees with *my general Assertion*. For as the Learned Dr. *Whitby* expresses himself
 * *when we assert the Clearness and Sufficiency of*
Scripture Revelations in all Things necessary to le

* See his Discourse on 2 Cor. III. ver. 12, 13. annex'd to a Defence of the Propositions contain'd in the Lord Bishop of Bangor's Sermon, Pag. 45.

‘believed and done, we do this only in Opposition to the
 ‘repairing to any infallible Interpreter, *that we may*
 ‘attain to the Knowledge of them; and not in Oppo-
 ‘sition to the use of Reason deducing evident CON-
 ‘CLUSIONS from Scripture Principles, or in Oppo-
 ‘sition to any other Thing which it is our Duty to per-
 ‘form, and which it is in our Power to do, to make the
 ‘Scripture clear untous in Things necessary’. It suf-
 ficiently secures the *Perfection* of Scripture, and
 answers the *End* of a Revelation, if whatever
 is *necessary* be clearly and fully revealed therein;
 so that we need not have recourse to any other
 written, or unwritten, Traditions as a Rule of
 Faith, or to any infallible, authoritative Judges of
 the *Sense* of Scripture; but may ourselves, by the
divine Assistance, (the *NECESSITY* of which is
 not, I hope, excluded, by the *Perspicuity* and *Suf-
 ficiency* of Scripture) abundantly learn from thence
 what our duty is. But this is in the nature of
 Things impossible to be done, without the Exer-
 cise of our rational Powers, in making *Judgments*
 and drawing *Conclusions* on which we must inevi-
 tably depend as *certain Truths*.

It is hardly worth while to dispute, whether as
 you apprehend, ‘the *IMPORTANCE* of Scripture-
 ‘Consequences must chiefly be measur’d by the Plain-
 ‘ness and Easiness of their Deduction from it’; or,
 whether we ought not also to regard the *Nature* and
Quality of the Truths themselves, and their In-
 fluence in Religion, in judging of their *Impor-
 tance*; which, I believe, most People will, with-
 out a Monitor, readily apprehend we ought to do. I
 own

SCRIPTURE-CONSEQUENCES. 101

own G O D cannot be suppos'd to have made any Thing *necessary* to Salvation, that by Reason of its *Obscurity*, cannot be found out to be a Truth revealed in Scripture, either *expressly*, or by a *lawful Consequence*. Tho' considering that *some* have not *their Senses exercised to discern Good and Evil*, or to distinguish between Truth and Error, and *others* may be wilfully blind, or vitiated with strong Prejudices, or under some efficacious Delusion, I should be loth to have the *Importance* of divine Truths, whether *primary* or *consequential*, to be measur'd chiefly by what *every one* may be pleas'd to confess is *plain* and *easy*. It must in this Respect be with *Scripture-Consequences*, as it is with the *literal Text* itself. Where any places are so *obscure*, or *hard to be explain'd*, as that we cannot, by all the Means and Helps afforded us, come at the *real determinate* Meaning of them, we are not oblig'd to take them in that *unscrutable* Meaning; only, we are to believe in general, that they are *true*; or to understand them in the most *probable* Sense. Thus if any *Consequences* are so *remote*, or *uncertain*, as that we cannot, by any Means which God hath made it our Duty, or put in our Power to use, or, by all the *supernatural Assstances* he has promis'd to such as sincerely endeavour to know, and do his Will, through Faith in Christ, arrive at the Knowledge of them; such *Consequences* cannot be suppos'd to be of great Importance in Religion.

BUT it can never follow from hence, that nothing is supported by the *Argument of a divine Authority*, or may be urged as *necessary*, but upon the

For

Formality of an *IT IS WRITTEN*; taking these Words in a strict and proper Sense, as I suppose you do. Your Words are, ‘ *I apprehend it one main End of Revelation, to lay Things necessary to Salvation clearly before Men by an easy Way of Conveyance, supported by the Argument of a divine Authority; that so the plainest People, who are not us’d to a Course of regular Reasoning, might yet believe and act as God requireth them in order to eternal Life, upon the Authority of an IT IS WRITTEN.*’ If this be true, if we are not oblig’d in order to our Acceptance with God, to believe or act but upon the Authority of *an it is written*; all Consequences from Scripture, how plain soever they are, must of necessity be banish’d out of our Catalogue of *Things necessary*, otherwise, we must allow that some Consequences may be urg’d upon our Consciences with that Authority. There is no Medium; and you need not have employ’d one Thought in stating the Regard due to Scripture-Consequences, or the Measure of their Importance, since, according to you, they have no Authority at all in determining what is necessary to be believed or done in order to Salvation. For, I doubt whether you will say of a Consequence, *IT IS WRITTEN*; tho’ the Scriptures do authorize even that way of speaking. But I would fain know how ‘ *Ignorance of some consequential Truths may be ruinous to any*’, as you allow, Pag. 17. If nothing be necessary to Salvation, or supported by the Argument of a divine Authority, that is not formally written? Can the Salvation of any be endanger’d by their Ignorance of what is not necessary to be known; or of what is not supported by a divine Authority?

I might press this a little farther; but I take it for granted you are willing, *at any rate*, to appear to say the same Thing with your Committee, who tell us in the 2d part of their Reply, Pag. 18. 'That the use of Consequences from Scripture, to come at, and to illustrate Truth, is no Controversy between them and the Subscribers; yet add, 'But Matters in Scripture made necessary to Salvation depend not upon Consequences',—because 'that Jesus Christ has left us a clear and perfect Revelation'. And Pag. 21. 'We don't think that what is made absolutely necessary, is left to mere Consequences'.

It is ambiguous what they mean by being **MADE** necessary in Scripture; in the Words that go before, they alledge, that 'only the Things made necessary to Salvation by express Declaration of Scripture, are the Terms of Christian Communion, or Acceptance with God'. That is, they are only the Things made necessary to Salvation, by express Declaration of Scripture, that are the Terms of Acceptance with God, or that are made necessary to Salvation. We cannot mistake their Meaning here, because they have condescended to give it twice. So that to be consistent with themselves, by being **MADE** necessary to Salvation, they must intend *made necessary by express Declaration of Scripture*: And then, what they say with respect to Consequences is this, *Matters in Scripture made necessary to Salvation, BY EXPRESS DECLARATION OF SCRIPTURE, depend not upon Consequences*. An admirable Discovery!

THEY

THEY say farther, That *Things necessary are not left to mere Consequences*. But here also it is uncertain what they intend by being *left to mere Consequences*. Consequences are *not left to themselves*; I mean, they are not *independent Propositions*, but *relate to their Premises*. And Doctrines prov'd by necessary Consequences from *Scripture Propositions*, do necessarily *depend upon those Propositions*, and are so *connected with them* that they must stand or fall together. But if, with the *Socinians*, they mean, that nothing can be *necessary* which is only demonstrated by *Consequences from Scripture*; then how comes it to pass that they allow of the *Use of Consequences to come at, and to illustrate Truth*? Is the *use of Consequences necessary to come at, and to illustrate necessary Truths*? If not, then we may *come at necessary Truths, and illustrate them too, without Understanding, and without Judgment*? If the Affirmative be granted, then *necessary Truths* do so far depend upon *Consequences*, that we cannot come at *necessary Truths* without the *use of them*; whence, I think, it will follow, that *necessary Articles of Faith* can never be *stated or illustrated without the use of Reason in deducing evident Conclusions from Scripture Principles*.

It is an easy thing to say, That things necessary are not left to *Consequences*; but it is not so easy for Men of Sense, to invent one Argument in *Proof* of it, but what they will presently see, overturns the *Necessity* of receiving the *Words of Scripture* in any one determinate Sense. Might
not

not the *Sadducees* have urg'd this Plea with as good a Grace as a *Non-Subscriber*? But the *Resurrection*, we are told, is not left to mere Consequences. What then? It was left to Consequences; and the Doctrine of a future State too. And yet this Doctrine was at that Time a necessary Article of Faith. And the *Sadducees* might have seen it in the Writing of *Moses*, were it not for their *Stupidity*, and *Ignorance* of the Scriptures, and that their *Lusts* were interested.

I know not whether a *Non-Subscriber* will hold it necessary to believe *αἰὲτος ἀνάστασις*, the Resurrection of the *Flesh*, according to the common Faith of Christians, and as it is express'd in all the ancient *Creeds*. But this can hardly be prov'd without a *Consequence*. And there have been some who confess'd a *Resurrection*, and would use the Terms of a *Body*, or the *Body*, who yet denied the Resurrection of the *Flesh*, or of those very *fleshly Bodies* in which we live here on Earth. Saint *Jerome* speaks of some, who denying a strict and proper Resurrection, shrouded their *Heresy* under the ambiguous Words of a *Bodily Resurrection**, *Credimus inquit*, &c. We believe, say they, the future Resurrection of the *Body*; which, if it be sincerely said, is a pure Confession; but because there are celestial and terrestrial *Bodies*, and the *Air* and *Æther* according to their *Natures*, are called *Bodies*, therefore they use the Word *BODY*, and not *FLESH*,

* *Vid. Critical History of the CREED, Pag. 398. and Bishop Pearson on the same Article.*

‘that whilst the Orthodox hearing the Word Body, apprehend it to be FLESH, the Hereticks understand it to be a Spirit’ (or a thin, subtle, aerial Body, immediately framed by the Power of God, unto which the human Soul shall be united, instead of its own proper Body) ‘which is their first Evasion’. I am sorry, the like prevaricating Method should be reviv’d in our Day. That CHRIST is GOD, if it be sincerely said, is a pure Confession. But it is Falshood and Prevarication in the Mouth of a disguis’d Arian or Socinian. For, whilst the Orthodox, hearing him confess that JESUS CHRIST is GOD, apprehend he means the great and true GOD, he intends no more by it than a dignified Creature, or a dependent Power.

WE are yet farther told by the Committee, ‘That the Jewish Scriptures were veiled and imperfect, whereas Jesus Christ has left us a clear and Perfect Revelation’. But who, that was not besides himself, would argue, that because a Revelation is clear and perfect, therefore the Consequences that result from it, can have no Authority to determine our Faith in Things necessary? If the Sadducees were obliged to believe a Consequence from an obscure Revelation; if they greatly erred in denying, and because they deny’d what Moses shewed, only Consequentially, in the Mount, what shall we say of those who refuse to be concluded by Consequences from a Revelation which they themselves acknowledge to be conspicuous?

IF it be still urg’d, that all Things necessary must in so many Letters and Syllables be written in the sacred

sacred Canon. I answer, That this is a begging the Question ; and might be urg'd by the Jews in our Saviour's Time, as well as by the *Non-Subscribers* now. Even † *Socinus* himself was asham'd of so Childish and Sophistical an Evasion, as appears by the Quotation in the *Margin*. It manifestly reflects Dishonour upon God, the Author of our intelligent Natures; and is too great a Degradation of the human Understanding. It is not only our Duty to read the Scriptures, but to

† *When Francis Davidis pleads against worshipping Christ, necesse esse Literam adferre, & id quod asseritur manifestè demonstrare : Socinus (himself) replies, Id quod asseritur manifestè demonstrari debere planè concedo ; literam autem (presertim eo sensu quo tu hæc verba præfers) adferre necesse esse, prorsus nego : me autem iure hoc facere id apertè confirmat, quod quædam dogmata in Christi Ecclesia receptissima, non solum per expressam Literam non probantur, sed ipsam sibi contrariam habent. Exempli causâ inter omnes ferè Christiani nominis homines receptissimum est, deum non habere aliqua Membra corporis, ut aures, oculos, nares, brachia, pedes, manus ; & tamen non modo expresse & literaliter (ut vocant) id Scriptum in sacris libris non est ; verum etiam contrarium omnino passim diserte Scriptum extat. And with respect to Consequences in particular, Quicquid aut RATIONIBUS, aut CONSEQUUTIONIBUS adeo aperte probatur, ut Mens humana necessario acquiescet, id (sive diserte Scriptum extet, sive minus) credendum & retinendum omnino est. This he afterwards applies to the Words ESSENCE and PERSONS, and rejects the Plea of his Companions thus, Simile quod affert de vocabulis Essentia, & personarum à nobis repudiatis, quia in sanctis Literis non inveniuntur, non est admittendum. Nemini enim verò cordato persuadebitis id quod per ea vocabula adversarii significare voluerunt, idcirco repudiandum esse, quia ipsa vocabula scripta non inveniuntur ; immo, quicumque ex nobis hac ratione sunt usi, suspectam apud nonnullos, alioquin Ingenio, & eruditione præstantes viros, causam nostram reddidere. And concludes, Quare desinamus hæc puerilia & inania atque sophistica Sectari ; & quæ viris digna, & solidissima ac verissima sunt prosequamur Socinus Tom. II, Pag. 778; Irenop. 1656.*

learn from them ; not only to repeat the *Words* (which *Parrots* may be taught to do) but to drink in their *Sense* and *Meaning* ; to try all Things, and compare spiritual Things with spiritual. This may be done not only by the τέλει, the perfect, who are of a ripe Age ; but by all who have the right use of their Faculties ; and do not think and reason διὰ νηπιότητι, as Children and Ideots. Nor can it be done, without suffering ourselves to be determin'd by clear *Deductions*, in Things of the greatest Importance.

WE contend for it, that the *Scriptures* do do plentifully reveal whatever is necessary to be believ'd or done. But all Things necessary are not contain'd in every place of Scripture that may relate to them, or make mention of them. We must therefore of necessity, compare Scripture with Scripture, and from such Comparisons draw certain Conclusions which must terminate our Enquiries, and fix our Notions, if ever they are fix'd. In a Word, without the use of Consequences we can never make the *Scriptures* clear unto ourselves, in Things necessary to Salvation ; because the Places that relate to them, cannot be rightly understood, or applied by us, or collated with other Places that relate to the same Things, but by Ratiocination and Deduction. No Declaration of Scripture can be of greater Importance than that mention'd by you, *He that believeth shall be saved* : But how plain soever it is, it can be of no use to us, unless we enquire into the Nature and Quality of this Faith, the Acts required to it, and the Objects

jects on which they fix; together with the *Quality* of that *Salvation* which is promis'd to the *Believer*. The like Process must be us'd to understand those Passages in which *Remission of Sins* is connected with *Repentance*. And can we arrive at any *Certainty* or *Satisfaction* herein, without regarding the *Analogy* of Faith, and depending on *necessary Consequences* from Scripture in Matters of *absolute Necessity* to our Interest in the revealed Promises of God? Even those who deny their *Authority* to determine Mens Faith, are yet forc'd to *make use* of them, to *rely* upon them, and be *determin'd* by them, orherwise their Faith is vain.

MORE need not be said here to shew the Consistency of our Doctrine with the *Perfection* of Scripture, and the great *End* of Revelation. Especially seeing your last *Particular*, will lead us to consider, whether they can in Reason, be suppos'd to make a *credible Profession* of Christianity, who, appealing to the *Letter* of Scripture only, refuse to give their *Sense* of it, in *their own*, or *other human Words*; and renounce the *Authority* of *Scripture-Consequences* in *stating* Articles of Faith.

IT is truly a noble Contest to stand up for the *Perfection* of Scripture. This, you know, *Sir*, the *Non-Subscribers* are great Pretenders to. Nor would I go about to rob them of that Honour, which all *Protestants* must be ambitious to share in. But it is *unkind* in them, nor is it very *consistent* with *Common Sense*, that they should charge their

their Brethren, the *Subscribers*, with obscuring the Glory of the Gospel, and verging towards *Popery*, because they think Men are oblig'd to pay a sacred Regard to *Scripture-Consequences*, as to *Scripture-Revelations*. Surely, Men of *Sense* will be surpris'd at this Management. What can be more *Paradoxal*, than that those who refuse to own the *Authority* of good and *lawful Consequences* from Scripture, in *deciding* Articles of Belief; who regard *all Consequences* as *uncertain human Decisions*, that can never support a *Divine Faith*; should accuse *others* of denying the *Perfection* of Scripture, for asserting that *just and lawful Consequences* from it, have the *Force* and *Authority* of those very *Principles* they are necessarily connected with, and, are a sure Ground to build our Faith upon? This is extraordinary. It has something in it like the Conduct of that *Woman*, who protested that the *living Child* belong'd to her, when in the mean Time she was willing to have it cut in *Two*; and contenting herself with *one half* of it, would reduce the *whole* to a senseless Clod. It hath been already observ'd, and is generally well known, that the *Jesuites*, whose Design it has always been to take off Men from the *Scriptures*, and to oppugn their *Sufficiency*, have made it their Business to propagate this Notion, *That Scripture-Consequences have no Authority to determine Mens Faith*; and that they are but *uncertain Conjectures of fallible Men*, on which we can never, with any *Security*, found our Belief. And must the *Perfection* of Scripture be now guarded by those very Weapons, that have been so often taken up to demolish them, and spoil them of all
their

their Usefulness? Shall they who magnify the Scriptures, in yielding to those *Conclusions* that evidently result from them, have *Popery* imputed to them, and be branded with questioning the *Sufficiency* of the Scriptures, by those very Men, who, tho' unwarily and without Design, gratify the *Jesuits*, and do their Work, in spreading a *Method* of all others the most friendly to *Popery*, and most dishonourable to the *Holy Scriptures*? That political Fraternity are not ignorant of the natural Operation of this *Method*, where-ever it prevails among *Protestants*. It presently unhinges those who imbibe it, from any settled Principles in Religion. For how can that Man be confirm'd in any certain Principles, whose Principle it is, that, Men being obnoxious to Error, nothing can be certainly deduc'd from the *Word of God*, by Reason and Argumentation? When Once Men are brought to this Pass, there is but a Step between them and *Popery*, or *Infidelity*. Even of this last the *Jesuits* know how to make their Advantage; for no Religion suites an *Infidel* better than *Popery*. And their greatest Harvest is among those, who being *Sceptical*, and consequently *indifferent* as to all *Persuasions*, have nothing to fortify them against the glozing Artifices of *Seducers*.

I have always thought that the Cry of *Imposition* against the *Subscribing Ministers*, was an artful Contrivance, to draw a People zealous of *Liberty*, on a false Scent; and to divert their Thoughts from attending to the true State of Things. But it is really an *Affront* offer'd to Mankind,

Mankind, for those who dispute the *Authority* of *Scripture-Consequences* in Matters of Faith, to charge those with *Popery*, and denying the *Perfection* of *Scripture*, who are only contending for a *Principle*, which if it be *not true*, those very *Scriptures* can be of *no use* to us, nor *assure* our *Minds* of any *Thing* they reveal, without having *Recourse* to an *infallible Interpreter*.

And most dishonourable to the Holy Scriptures; That political Liberty are not ignorant of the natural Operation of this Method, where ever it prevails among Mankind. It plainly unfolds those who impute it from any false Principles in Religion. For how can that Man be consistent in any *Political Principles* whose Principle is, that Men being obnoxious to Error, nothing can be certainly deduced from the Word of God, by Reason and Argument. Since Men are brought to this State of Ignorance, by the influence of the Devil, and the influence of the Devil, who for a long time, have been the great enemies of the Christian Religion, and who are now as to all *Political Principles*, they are against the glorious

I have always thought that the City of London, was an enemy against the Subverting Ministry, was an enemy to draw a People restless of Liberty on a false Sense; and to divert their Thoughts from attending to the true State of Things. But it is really an Affront offered to Mankind,



CHAP. VI.

Some farther Considerations concerning the binding Force of Scripture-Consequences. That the Obligation to believe them, depends not on the Judgment and Apprehensions of Men themselves, but is of the same Extent, and to be measur'd by the same Rule, with the Obligation to believe the Scriptures, or to receive them in any determinate Sense. Of the Plea of Sincerity in Mens Searches after Truth. The Supposition of sincere Unbelievers destructive of Christianity, and the Rule of Faith.

THE Method you have led me into, requires that I should take another view of what you offer next, from Pag. 16. concerning the Obligation of Scripture-Consequences, and indeed of a Divine Revelation in general. And in what you write on this Head, you differ no more from me, that you seem to do from yourself.

I. First, You allow that 'Consequences from Scripture are obligatory, not only upon those who actually see the Connexion of them with Scripture-Declarations, but upon such as have had sufficient Means to discover that Connexion, unless they were wickedly ne-

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gligent

‘*ligent or obstinate*’. This, I had occasion to remark in another Place, sets the *Obligation* of them upon the *same Foot* with *that* of the express *Words* of Scripture. Since no Man can be obliged to believe *these*, or to take them in any *determinate* Sense, but who, either *actually* sees the *Evidence* of their Divinity, and discerns *such* Meaning ; or has had *sufficient* Means and Opportunities so to do. I say not that the *Belief* of *some Consequences* from Scripture, tho’ just and lawful, is of equal *Necessity* with a Man’s *believing* the Scriptures to be Divine, or with his *receiving* some Scripture Expressions in a certain *determinate* Sense ; because the Evidence, or Means of Discovery, in these Cases, and the *Importance* of Things themselves, may be very different. We must allow of a *Disparity* with respect to *Importance*, between express Declarations of Scripture ; as well as *between* some remote Consequences, and the Propositions that imply them. Some *Consequences* are of greater *Necessity* and *Importance* to be known, and believ’d, than the *Meaning* of many *literal* Texts of Scripture. As again it is more *necessary* to imbrace the *immediate* Sense of some Scripture Assertions, than to discern all the *Consequences* that spring from them. But he who has had *sufficient* Means to discover a *true* and *necessary* Consequence from Scripture, is *obliged* to believe *that* Consequence, and to govern himself by it, as he who has had *sufficient* Means to discern the Evidence of a *Revelation*, or the *true Construction* of the Words in which it is delivered, is *obliged* to be determined by them. In *either* Case the *Obligation* is not founded on a Man’s
own

own Conception of Things ; but on the *Authority* of GOD and the Signification of his *Will*, who never fails to appoint those *Means*, which are *sufficient* to attain their *End*, so far as his Honour is concern'd.

THE *Sufficiency* of these *Means* is not to be measur'd by the Caprice of Men, or the *Profit* which Individuals make of them; tho' their common Effects give great Light into it. The *Jews* had *convincing* Evidences that *Jesus* was the *Messias*, but they *saw* it not. The same may be said of *Deists*, and *Anti-scripturists* in our Time, who *discern* not the Truth of the Christian Religion. And I doubt not to affirm, the modern *Arians* have *sufficient Means* to discover that *Jesus Christ* is *one God* with the Father, *one* in Nature and Essence, in Power and Eternity; tho', if we take their Word for it (which is difficult to do) they *see* it not in *Scripture*. What *Means* are *becoming* God to give to Reasonable Creatures, that they might attain to the Knowledge of his Will, he himself is the Judge of. Those which have been *sufficient* to direct, and preserve the Faith of the Church in all Ages, and against all *Impostures*, and *Heresies* (insinuating themselves under a Shew of *Knowledge* and *Liberty*, and sometimes of *Zeal* and *Sanctity*, that if possible, they would deceive the very *Elect*;) are not to be condemn'd as *Insufficient*, for the sake of *Unbelievers* of any sort, who may complain of the want of Evidence. And tho' one Man may not determine what Arguments will *eventually* convince and persuade another (for some are invincibly reluctant to all *outward Means*, and

will not be wrought on in a moral way) yet this general Principle, applicable to all Cases and Persons, is what we may warrantably hold, that they are *inexcusable*, who refuse to be guided in Matters of Faith, or Practice, by those *Scripture-Consequences*, the inseparable Connexion of which with their *Premises*, they have had *sufficient Means* and Opportunities to discern.

I had thefore good Reason to observe in my
 † STRICTURES on this Argument, That if our
not seeing the plain and necessary *Consequences* of
 Scriptural Propositions, discharges us from any
Obligation to believe them; it will follow that our
not seeing the Evidences of a divine Revelation,
 discharges us from any *Obligation* to believe the
 Scriptures to be the Word of God. The Obliga-
 tion to believe the *one* or the *other* necessarily sup-
 poses our having had sufficient *Means* of Disco-
 very. And where *these* are afforded, we may cer-
 tainly conclude that their *not* answering their *End*,
 must be owing to the *Negligence* or *Obstinacy* of
 Men themselves, without appealing to the divine
 Omniscience that it is so.

THUS far then we seem agreed. Just and law-
 ful Consequences from Scripture are *Obligatory* on
 those who have had sufficient Opportunities to
 discern them, which lays the *binding Force* of
 them upon the *same Foot*, with *that* of the express
 Words of Revelation.

† *Advice*, pag. 29. *Marg.*

II. Secondly, But whether you do not relinquish this State of the Case, and put the Matter upon a different Bottom, the Reader will judge from your own Words, *Pag. 17, 18.* There, after you had very justly observ'd that *our seeing the Connexion of a Consequence with the Words of Scripture, conveys no Light at all to others, (and how should it, unless they saw with our Eyes?)* You add, in an entire Sentence, '*If they could not see the same Conclusion from Scripture as we do, how could THAT be binding to them?*' And can this have any other Meaning than what you expressly disclaim in the same Page, a putting the Matter upon *Meus seeing, or not seeing only?* For I must suppose that the Relative in your Question, which I have mark'd with Capitals, does not refer to our *Act of seeing*, but to the *Conclusion itself*, which it is presum'd we see. This Conclusion, according to you, cannot be binding to those who see it not. Had you extended its Obligation to such as have had *Means and Opportunities* of discerning its Connexion, this had been consistent with what you allow elsewhere; nor can any more be insisted on with respect to the most formal Passages of Scripture. But then the Question should have been thus; *If they could not see the same Conclusion from Scripture as we do, nor were ever afforded sufficient Means of apprehending it, how could that Conclusion be binding to them?* Whereas upon Supposition of their having had such Means, it must run in this Strain; *If they could not see the same Conclusion from Scripture as we do, though they had sufficient Means and Opportunities of*
Dis-

118 A DISSERTATION concerning

Discovery, how could it be binding to them? I leave it to yourself to decide which of these Questions is most agreeable to your Sense. If the former, that State of the Question may, by Parity of Reason, be applied to the Scriptures in general, or to any of those Doctrines that integrate Christianity. Thus; If the Jews could not see that Jesus was the MESSIAS, as Christians do; nor ever had sufficient Means and Opportunities to discern that great Truth, I AM HE, how could that be binding to them? It could not. If the Question as founded on the Supposition of Mens having such Means, pleases best; the Answer is in your own Words, Consequences from Scripture are obligatory on those who have had sufficient Means to discover their Connexion. But if you demand the Question as it stands in your Letter, (pag. 18.) without any Addition or Qualification, as you have a Right to do; it is solv'd by what you freely allow with me, (Pag. 16.) That the Question is not, what a Man sees, or does not see; but what he ought to see, what he might see, if his Mind were not inlaid with Prejudice or Passion, and he humbly resign'd his Understanding unto God.

III. *Thirdly, In what follows you lay the Stress of the Argument upon a conscientious Enquiry after Truth. But then it ought to be considered that a Person cannot be truly sincere and conscientious in his Searches after Truth, and after all continue Ignorant of, or reject a divine Truth, that has been fairly proposed to him, that is attended with sufficient Evidence, and which he has had sufficient Means and Opportunities to discover. And without*

out such *Evidence* and *Means*, neither a *Scripture-Consequence*, nor *Proposition* can bind the Conscience of any. You grant ' *there is a great deal of Reason to question whether a conscientious Enquirer can reject the Gospel, after a fair Proposal of it*'. The same I say with respect to *Evident Conclusions* from *Scripture-Principles*; they cannot be rejected by any *sincere* Christian, who has had *Opportunities* to discern or find out the *Truth* of them.

UPON the whole, we may, I think, pronounce that the *Obligation* to believe *Scripture-Consequences*, and be determin'd by them in *Matters of Faith*, is to be judg'd of by the *same Rule*, that we judge of the *Obligation* to believe the *Scriptures* in general, or to take particular *Texts* in any *determinate Sense*. If we lay the *Stress* of the *Obligation* on Men's own *Judgment* and *Apprehensions* concerning them, so as to *absolve* those from *Obligation* by them, who see them not, who apprehend not such *Proof*, as you sometimes seem to do, not without *Cost*, and which appears to me to be the general *Vote* of the *Non-Subscribers*; we cannot avoid applying the *same Rule* to a *Revelation* in general, and making *Mens own Judgment* the *Standard* of every thing they are bound to believe. If it be own'd that Men may be *culpably blind*, when they actually see not what they ought to see, and had *Opportunities* of discerning. We insist upon no more. Only we plead that the *Obligation* to be determin'd by natural *Consequences* from *Scripture*, may be measur'd by *this Rule*, as well as the *Obligation* to be determin'd by the *Evidences* of revealed Religion, or the *Meaning* of particular *Texts*.

BUT

BUT it is to be feared, that Men are so full of themselves, and pay such *Devotion* to their own *Judgments* and *Apprehensions*, that all *Scripture-Revelations* must stand or fall; signify something or nothing, according as Men please. *Si Deus hominibus non placuerit, utique Deus non erit.* Perhaps this Notion will appear at last bare-fac'd, that a sincere good Man, may in the *Integrity* of his Heart, deny the *divine Authority* of the *Scriptures*, as well as the *eternal Power* and *Godhead* of *JESUS CHRIST*, the great Author of them. This brings me to consider,

IV. *Fourthly*, What you have advanc'd under this Head, (*Letter*, Pag. 19.) with respect to *Christianity* and the *Gospel* in general. 'Tis true, ' You question whether upon a fair Proposal of it, [the Gospel] it be possible for a conscientious Enquirer to reject it; especially now, since *Christ's Resurrection* and *Ascension into Heaven*, &c. But why do you demur about it? I thought this Matter was out of Question with Christians; and that we were all agreed we might without any Scruple pronounce that Man *unfincere*, and under the Conduct of an evil Conscience (supposing him to be capable of *Moral Sincerity*, or its contrary) who should refuse to be determin'd by the *Evidences* of the *Christian Revelation*. I very much doubt whether to make a Question of this, does sufficiently secure the Honour of the Gospel. Or whether to ' say this in the Theory, as you say, you do, be a sufficient Caution to all how they venture to reject the Gospel?'

pel: Especially, considering how condescending you are in the following Words, ‘ *But I think EVEN NOW, where there are not the evident Marks of a wicked Life accompanying it, we ought to leave such [as respect the Gospel] to the Judgment of Christ. And tho’ he was undoubtedly able with Certainty to pronounce of some of the Jews in his time, that they rejected him out of Insincerity, this would not have justified an ordinary Person in those Days for laying the same same Charge against any’.*

IT is here own’d, that where there are evident Marks of a wicked Life, we are at Liberty to judge. But is not the Rejection of the Gospel, now, that all the finishing Attestations are given to it, a Wickedness to be judg’d of, and condemn’d by all Christians ? Or must we look for any more aggravated Marks of a wicked Life to justify our condemning of any ? It becomes us to leave all Persons and Things to the final Judgment of Christ. But his Judgment is already written, *He that believeth not shall be condemn’d, or is condemn’d already; and the Wrath of God abideth on him.* This is the Sentence of the eternal Judge, of that one Lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy ; and this Sentence will take place on all that finally reject the Gospel, whatever their Conduct may have been in other Instances of Life. The Distinction you make between evident Marks of a wicked Life, and a Man’s rejecting the Gospel, can be founded only on this, that it is not an evident Wickedness for a Man to reject the Gospel. Which I am so far from giving into, that I look upon it to be a Wickedness of a most Crimson Dye. *He that believeth not God, hath made him*

a Liar. A Provocation worthy of that *fiery Vengeance which shall devour the Adversaries,*

BESIDES, it appears to be a Contradiction to the whole Tenor of Scripture, to suppose that any can now reject the Gospel, and not lead a wicked Life. Since our Saviour hath expressly told us, *That Men love Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds are Evil.* That if any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God. That Men will not repent, that they might believe. And that they cannot believe, because they receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that is of God. And every where resolves the Unbelief of Men into their hatred of the Truth. Did he not condemn the Jews of Wickedness and Insincerity, when he assigns this as the Reason of their Unbelief, *That their Heart was waxed gross, and the Ears dull of hearing, and that they had closed their Eyes; lest at any time they should see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Hearts, and be converted and healed?*

BUT 'this you say, would not have justified an ordinary Person in those Days for laying the same Charge, [of Insincerity] against any'. What? Might not any Person, who had seen the Miracles of Christ, heard his Doctrine, had been a Witness, or otherwise had had sufficient Evidence of all the glorious Attestations to his Person and Character, condemn those of Insincerity, who should refuse to be concluded by them? Consider, Sir, whither this tends. It pre-supposes there was not then a
sufficient

sufficient convictive Evidence, that *Jesus was the Mes-*
fias ; since *no Evidence* of this could be *sufficient*, but
 what left those who rejected it, absolutely *without*
Excuse. And if they were without Excuse, why
 might not an ordinary Person, who knew *such*
Evidence was *propos'd* to them, and *rejected* by
 them, lay the Charge of Insincerity at their
 Door.

To transfer this to the present Times, as your
even now does, derogates much more from the *Per-*
fection, *Sufficiency*, and *Clearness* of Scripture-Re-
 velation, than my *Assertion* about the Authority
 of *Scripture-Consequences* ; or than to *subscribe* a
Scripture Doctrine in human Words. The *former*
 can't be denied but upon such Principles as *nullify*
 the Faith, and resolve the Authority of Scripture
 into an *Eccho* ; for what else shall we call *Words* or
Sounds divested of any DETERMINATE *Authorita-*
tive Meaning, or *Consequences* ? The *latter* is at all
 times a harmless Thing, and was to *us*, then, a
necessary Duty, notwithstanding all the Clamours
 rais'd against it, with the terrible Names of I N-
 Q U I S I T I O N, P E R S E C U T I O N, Infringement of
 L I B E R T Y, P O P E R Y, and other the like Im-
 putations as *weak* as *false*, and fit only to amuse
Women and *Children* withall.

B U T, Sir, if we may not, *even now*, judge that
 Man *wicked* and *unsincere* who shall reject the Go-
 spel, without being oblig'd to enquire farther into
 his Character ; yea, tho' in his outward Deport-
 ment he appear'd like an *Angel of Light*, the Con-

sequence is, that it is possible a Man may be *sincere* and *conscientious*, in his Desires and Searches after Truth, and yet in the *Simplicity* and *Integrity* of his Heart *Godward*, deny the Truth of the Christian Religion, and the Authority of Scripture. It is not enough to say, ‘*there is a great deal of Reason to question, whether this is ever a Case in Fact, or to suggest this in the Theory, as a Caution to all how they venture to reject the Gospel*’; for we cannot be debar’d from censuring *all* who refuse Obedience to it, as *wicked* and *unfincere*, but upon *this Supposition*, that it is possible for a Man of *Probity* and *Sincerity* so to do. And if this can be true of any *one*, it may be true of a *Second*, a *Third*, a *Fourth*, or a whole *Nation* of Men. So that not only a *Socinian* * not only a *Worshipper* of more Gods than *one*, but even a *Deist*, or an *Infidel* may be under the under the Influence of those *Principles* which are necessary to a good Life, tho’ he *contemns* the Gospel Covenant, because he does it *sincerely*.

I am mistaken, if, in the famous *Baugorian Controversy*, the most learned and judicious Advocates for *justifying Sincerity* carried Matters thus far. These *Theories* are an *after Birth*; and propagated by *younger Heads*, who cannot see afar off, and scorn to be *determin’d* by *Consequences*. No wonder if they should be grateful to the *corrupt Generality*,

* Letter to the Reverend Mess. Tong, Robinson, Smith, Reynolds, by a LAYMAN, Pag. 60, 61.

who are averse to all Restraint of *Pride* or *Lust*; and whose Cry is, *Let us break their Bands asunder, and cast away their Cords from us.* But how friendly soever they may seem to be (for in Reality they are pernicious) to loose *Scepticks*, and *Unbelievers* of the Gospel; they are destructive of Christianity, and of the Rule of Christian Faith. † Because they plainly infer, that the Evidences of the Christian Religion, are not so full, so plain and convictive, but that a sincere good Man may reject it, and continue an *Unbeliever*, without any Apprehension of that Threatning, *He that believeth not shall be damn'd.* The Consequence of which is, that Christianity itself was not absolutely necessary, to recover the Perfection and Integrity of human Nature, and restore Sinners to the Favour of an offended G O D. For Men might be sincere and good and holy without it, as well as become, or continue so, after they have rejected the Christian Faith for want of convincing Evidence. And whether this be not to disarm the Gospel of its main Force, and put all Religions on a Level, that agree in the ‘*the Belief of God, and his Attributes of Holiness and Justice, and of a future State of Retribution*’, (which some Anti-Subscribers will have to be the only Principles necessary to influence a good and holy Life; tho’ they allow that some Principles of revealed Religion may be Inducements to it) I leave to your second Thoughts; which may perhaps suggest unto you, that the Gospel shines with so strong a Light,

† Dr. Whitby's Defence, &c. Sect. 4. of Sincerity, Pag. 21, &c.
and

and commends itself to every Man's Conscience with such a Manifestation of the Truth, that it is absolutely impossible a Man can reject it, and yet be sincere, with that Sincerity which is of God. And consequently, that we may without any Apprehension of transgressing the Rules of Charity, or of invading the Prerogative of the great Judge, pronounce them wicked, desperately so, and in a State of Damnation, who shall now refuse to give Obedience to it. If the Gospel be hid, it is hid from them that are lost, whose Minds, Satan, the God of this World, hath blinded, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, should shine into them.



are of equal Evidence, and of equal Necessity to be acknowledged, with their Premises. This applied to the Doctrine of the ever Blessed TRINITY, as stated in the Declaration of Faith, made by the Subscribing Ministers. Other Objections answer'd. Grounds of Censure. That they may be justly censur'd who absolutely refuse to be determin'd by evident Conclusions from Scripture, in Matters of Faith. This Doctrine consistent with every Man's Right to judge for himself. The whole proving that the late Notions of the Non-Subscribers, are calculated to demolish all Distinction between Heresie and sound Doctrine, as they affect a Right to the Offices and Privileges of Christian Communion.

YOUR fourth and last Particular, relates to that Stress which ought (or rather ought not) to be laid on Scripture-Consequences, in regulating the Terms of Christian Communion.

It begins thus, ' I doubt whether I should have a
' sufficient Warrant for denying Brotherly Love,
' or Christian Communion to any, barely for a Difference about Scripture-Consequences, as long as they
' own the express Declarations of Scripture, give credible Proofs that they have taken Pains to understand the
' Mind of God in them, and in other respects appear
' truly

'truly conscientious'. Your Reason is, That such a Denial, would be a refusing to own them as *credible Professors of Christianity*, which, you say, cannot be done 'without taking upon us to judge of their Insincerity, or supposing that the Scripture makes more necessary to a Man's being a Christian, than it does itself declare; or else disowning the Perfection of the Christian Rule'. What you have said besides, on this Head, shall have due Regard pay'd to it as Occasion presents.

I shall not now enquire, whether some may not be the *Objects* of our *Brotherly Love*, to whom it is our *Duty* to deny the great *Pledge* of *Christian Communion*; or with whom we may not, with a *safe Conscience* join in all the solemn Offices of Religion. The Matter is disputable. Charity hopeth all Things. I know not that we are called to pronounce a *Damnatory Sentence* against all to whom we are *obliged* to deny the *Seals* of the Covenant. I may charitably hope a Man is a *Member* of the *Mystical Body* of CHRIST, and, as such, the Object of my Love, tho' I am bound to think him *unfit* for present actual Communion. And I question whether the Boundaries of *external Communion* and *Christian Charity*, are adequately the same. This I observe, because you join *denying Brotherly Love*, and *Christian Communion* together; as if it must necessarily follow, that we ought to deny *Brotherly Love*, to all to whom we ought to deny *Christian Communion*. But not to insist on this.

YOUR Words, *barely for a Difference about Scripture-Consequences*, are very general, and of uncertain Signification. I am well satisfy'd, I have no Warrant to deny Christian Communion to many who may differ from me about some *Conclusions* from Scripture, or the *Meaning* of some particular Texts. Let us therefore reduce the Matter to a *determinate Point*.

IT is acknowledg'd on all Hands, that a *credible Profession* of Christianity, is all that ought to be insisted on to *give Right* to Communion. Nor can it be denied, that the *Church* or *Congregation* to which Application is made for *Personal* local Communion (for of *that* we now speak) has a Right to judge, whether such a Profession be *credible* or not. If any Church shall usurp a Power to make *what* Terms of Communion it pleases; if, under the Pretence of *Authority*, other Terms are insisted on, than are warranted by Scripture, or included in the Christian Covenant, or necessary, to answer the *Scripture-Characters* of such as constituted the *Evangelical Churches*: Or, if *these* Terms are dispens'd with: if, under the Umbrage of *Liberty*, or not *straitning the Foundations* of *Christian Communion*, Churches shall admit of an *Heterogeneous Mixture*, and receive those who are openly *vitious*, or *Idolaters*; or those who are *grossly ignorant* of the Doctrines of the Gospel, or who deny any of those Principles that *integrate* Christianity, or *refuse* to give a *Pledge* of the *Soundness* of their Faith; or, if *that* be not required, but
Men

Men are admitted without any *such* Profession at all: In either of these Cases the respective Churches are answerable for it, to the great Master of Christian Assemblies. But to deny such Assemblies a Right or Power to *judge*, so far as it affects their own Conduct, concerning the *Credibility* of *their* Profession, who apply to them for Christian Communion, is to destroy the End and Essence of Churches; and to introduce an horrible Confusion into all the Offices of Religion.

Now, the Argument will turn upon this; what ought to be deem'd a *credible Profession* of *Christianity*; or whether *they* make *such* a *Profession*, who *barely* own the *Words* of Scripture, but refuse, in *other* than *Scripture Phrase*, to give their *Sense* of Scripture, and decline to be *determined* by *Scripture-Consequences*, in *Matters of Faith*? †

S 2

BEFORE

† I intend, in the Resolution of this Question, to speak only of *Matters of Faith*. Tho' it might be easily demonstrated, that the Plea of appealing to the express Words of Scripture only, and disowning the Authority of plain *Consequences* from it, is of a very ill Tendency even in *Matters of Practice*. And it is worth the Reader's Notice, however *some* may make a Jest of it, that this *Subterfuge* was *first* invented to justify a Custom not very friendly to *Morality*, or the *Worship* of God. *Tertullian* informs us; (*Lib. de Spect. c. 3.*) It was question'd among some of the less confirm'd sort of Christians, whether it was not lawful to go to the *Public Shows*, and *Theatres*. This was oppos'd by the better Sort, as tending to corrupt the *Morals* of the People, and to tempt to *Idolatry*. But *others*, who were for a *Latitude*, pleaded that such Abstinence was not, *nominatim*, expressly prohibited the Servants of God. To which *Tertullian* replies, *plane nusquam invenimus, quemadmodum aperte positum est, non occides; —ita exserte definitum, non ibis in Circum, non in Theatrum, agonem, munus non expectabis*

Sed

BEFORE I enter into the Merits of this Cause, I shall *first* more fully set down what I take to be your Sentiment about it; in which, I have Reason to conclude, you are agreed with the rest of the *Non-Subscribers*. As far as I can conceive, you make no more necessary to a *credible Profession* of the Christian Faith, but what Men of all *Persuasions*, professing the Christian Name, will readily subscribe to. You represent it as an *Absurdity* to deny the Credibility of their Profession, who own the *express Declarations of Scripture*; as implying that the *Scripture makes more necessary to a Man's being a Christian, than it does itself declare*. That is, *literally declare*. For you use the Terms *Declare* and *Declarations*, in Contradistinction to *Scripture-Consequences*, and to the *Sense of Scripture* expressed in *human Words*. And in applying this to the TRINITY, you say, we should 'be content with Persons Profession of what the Scripture expressly declares—tho' they should chuse not to go one Step farther; or, should decline to use any particular Word about it, which is not found in Scripture

Tis
 Sed invenimus, ad hanc quoque Speciem pertinere illam primam vocem David, felix vir, inquit, qui non abiit in Concilium Impiorum, &c. He confesses that the Heathen Spectacles were not, in precise Terms condemn'd in Scripture, but urges, that by good Consequence the first Words of David might be applied to all such Kinds of Entertainments, Blessed is the Man that walketh not in the Counsel of the Ungodly, nor standeth in the Way of Sinners, &c. Dall. de Fid. ex Script. Demonstrat. Pag. 42. Such was the ORIGINAL of that famous Plea, which, passing through the Hands of Arians, Socinians, Jesuits, Familists, Quakers, is now the darling Principle of the NON-SUBSCRIBERS.

* 'Tis true, you mention their *'giving credible Proofs that they have taken Pains to understand the Mind of God, and that in other Respects they appear truly conscientious'*. But these are very general Qualifications, which all pretend unto. Some, of the greatest *Corrupters* of the Faith, have been famous for their *Diligence* and *Application*, as well, as for their *Acuteness* in *wresting the Scriptures*; but, they say, in *taking pains to understand the Mind of God in them*. Besides, *barely* owning the express Words of Scripture, is hardly a *credible Proof* that Men have taken *due Pains*. As for appearing, in *other Respects*, conscientious, so may a *Jew* or a *Mahometan* do.

UPON the whole, I see not but you put *Arians* and *Socinians*, upon the same Foot, as to all Christian Privileges, with the most *Orthodox*. Tho' even Mr. *Whiston* himself would refuse *Baptism* to a † *Socinian*. This I presume will not be accounted an *unkind Insinuation*. You reckon it a Scripture-Consequence, *That these three are one God, &c.* A Consequence, which you say, *appears just to you*, tho' you dare not be *positive* about it. But then you tell us, with express Reference to this very Doctrine, that a *Difference* about Consequences, cannot warrant a Denial of Christian Communion: And that we should be content with Persons Profession of what the Scripture expressly declares, tho' they should refuse to own

* Letter, Pag. 14, 23. † Mr. Whiston's Letter to Dr. Humphrey's, in his Account of Dr. Sacheverell's Proceedings in order to exclude him from St. Andrews Church in Holborn, Pag. 4.

any Words that are not found in Scripture ; provided only they gave credible Proofs, that they had taken Pains, &c. And this they might easily do. For you add, ‘ If any should say,—a Man’s
 ‘ wrong Apprehension of the Sense of Scripture, or of
 ‘ a Consequence deduced from it, is a Proof that he has
 ‘ not taken due Pains to understand the Mind of *
 ‘ God ; it would be assuming a Right to judge anothers
 ‘ Servant, and setting up for a Lord in Christ’s House’. And what is this but to extend a Right to all the Offices and federal Privileges that belong, or relate to spiritual Communion, in Christian Churches, to every peaceul Arian or Socinian ? I say Peaceful, for it seems, ‘ If either his Imprudence or his
 ‘ warm Zeal for his peculiar Sentiment should give
 ‘ Reason to apprehend that he would raise a Flame ; or
 ‘ if the general Sense of the Society seem’d to lay a
 ‘ greater Stress than you did upon such a Consequence,
 ‘ † you would desire him to forbear, [insisting upon his Right] not for the Sake of his Notion, but
 ‘ for the Peace of the Society’. This also you assert with Reference to the Doctrine of the TRINITY. But whether your prudent Care to prevent an Inconvenience, or your Zeal for that Doctrine be most conspicuous, I will not determine.

But to the main Question itself.

I shall attempt to shew, to the Satisfaction of those who are for preserving a sacred Regard to the great Doctrines of Christianity, in stating the

* Letter, Pag. 20.

† Letter, Pag. 21.

Terms of Christian Communion ; that *barely* owning the *Words* of Scripture, whilst Men refuse to abide by any *definite Meaning* of them, and decline the *Authority* of plain *Consequences* from *Scripture-Principles*, in stating and *deciding* Articles of Faith, is not, of *itself*, a *credible Profession* of Christianity, or a *sufficient Pledge* of a Man's *Soundness* in the Faith of the Gospel. As for those who banter all *Distinction* between *Hereſie* and *ſound Doctrine* ; and count it a *Matter indifferent* what a Man's Faith is, if he but profeſs himſelf *Chriſtian*, in the groſs ; I cannot expect they ſhould much regard, what I, or wiſer Men, can offer on a Subject of this Nature. But I think, I can bring Matters to this ; that what is now a-Days offered as a *credible Profession* of Christianity, is *not ſo* ; otherwiſe, it is not neceſſary we ſhould receive the grand Principles of revealed Religion, in any *certain determinate Meaning*. As for your Addition of *taking Pains*, and appearing, in *other Reſpects* conſcientious ; I think I need take no farther Notice of it in this Argument. It is not improbable, but that an *Unbeliever* of the Gospel, may have labour'd much, as he imagines, in ſearch of Truth, and yet ſtill continue an Unbeliever. And tho' it is, in my Opinion, impoſſible ſuch a one ſhould be *truly conſcientious* in the Sight of God, and exempt from thoſe *Prejudices* which hinder the Reception of divine Truths, yet he may *appear* to be ſo to Men. The inſpir'd Writers tells us of *False Apoſtles*, *deceitful Workers*, *transforming themſelves into Apoſtles of Chriſt*, and *Ministers of Righteouſneſs*. An *Infidel* may be what we

we call a *Moral Man*, a good *Citizen*, and a *peaceable Neighbour*. But tho' such may be encourag'd as useful *Subjects* in the *Civil State*, they are, methinks, scarce fit for *Christian Communion*. And what an *Infidel* may be, need not, in point of Argument, be denied of a profess'd *Christian* or *Minister*, who holds such *Errors in Doctrine*, as will not only warrant, but even oblige a *Christian Congregation* to withdraw from him. To proceed,

My Argument is this.

That Profession which does not visibly distinguish between those who keep the Faith, and those who hold dangerous Errors, contrary to it, is not of itself, a credible Profession of Christianity, or a sufficient Pledge of a Man's Soundness in the Faith of the Gospel; but the bare owning the express Words of Scripture, whilst Men refuse to abide by any definitive Meaning of them, and decline the Authority of plain Consequences from Scripture Principles in stating and deciding Articles of Faith, is a Profession that does not visibly distinguish as aforesaid: Therefore, it is not a credible Profession of Christianity, or a sufficient Pledge of a Man's Soundness in the Faith of the Gospel.

THE Major, or first Proposition, will, I presume, be granted. For how can that be esteem'd a credible Profession, or a sufficient Pledge of a Man's Soundness in the Faith, which does not visibly distinguish between true Believers of the Gospel, and

and such as *err* even in *Fundamentals*? It is possible that *Hereticks* (if that be not an exploded Term) or even *Infidels*, may impose upon a Christian Church, and *creep in unawares*, by making an outward Confession which they inwardly *abhor*; but *such* a Profession may *visibly* distinguish them from *Unbelievers*, and the *unsound*, 'till their *Hypocrisy* is detected. But a Profession that does not *visibly* distinguish as above, cannot be look'd upon as a *sufficient Pledge* of a Man's Soundness in the Faith, unless we at once demolish all Distinction between *Truth* and *Error*, even in *Fundamentals*, so far as they affect *Christian Communion*. And then what becomes of the Concession in your famous *pacific Advices*, which begin thus; * 'We are clearly of Opinion, That there are Errors in Doctrine of that important (I suppose they mean pernicious) Nature, as will not only warrant, but even oblige, a Christian Congregation to withdraw from the Minister, or Ministers, that maintain and defend those Doctrines'?

THE *Minor* therefore only remains to be proved; or rather is too manifest to need any Proof. For all the erring *Sects* among Christians, *Papists*, *Idolaters*, *Anthropomorphites*, *Sabellians*, *Arians*, *Socinians*, *Familists*, *Muggletonians*, *Quakers*, as well as our new *Methodists*, do all boast of their Allegiance to Scripture, and profess readily to own the express *Declarations* of it, as to any point of Doctrine. Some of them, particularly the *Familists*

* *Authentick Account*, &c. *Pag.* 5.

and old *Antinomians*, whose *Heresy* Mr. *Peirce*, in his *Inquisition*, esteems much more destructive than *Arianism*, tell us roundly, that to regard *Consequences*, is to *darken the Glory of the Gospel*; † and that in this they are agreed with *Arians*, *Socinians*, and *Jesuits*, hath been observ'd oftner than once. And will our *Non-Subscribers* say, that a Profession which does not *visibly* distinguish a Man from any of these, is, of itself, a sufficient Pledge of his *Soundness* in the Faith; which I here take to be the same with a *credible Profession* of Christianity? Let them say so in plain Terms; and then I will ask them, what they mean by *Errors in Doctrine*, in the Front of their Advices? Mean time, I persuade myself, that all who have a vital spark of Christianity left them, and are capable of sedate Reasoning, will condemn as *erroneous*, a Principle which patronize such a horrid Confusion in Things sacred, and threatens to extirpate *all Faith*, and *all Religion* from among Men.

HOWEVER, I shall here, impartially consider, what *Prejudices* or *Objections*, you and others may think do lye against the Truth of what I have propos'd. And,

I. *First*, If it shall be said, that the bare 'owning the plain and express Declarations of Holy Scripture, in what is there made necessary to be believed, and in Matters there solely reveal'd', (the refusing of which is the only Ground of Censure, allow'd

† Mr. *Rutherford's Survey of the Spiritual Anti-Christ*, Pag. 50.
of

of by the *Non-Subscribers* *) is sufficient to distinguish those who *keep the Faith*, from such as hold *dangerous Errors*, contrary to it. I answer, This cannot be true but upon either of these Suppositions; I. That nothing is to be accounted a *dangerous Error* in Matters of Revelation, but a positive *Denial* of the *express Words* of Scripture. Or, II. That a *bare repeating* the *Words* of Scripture, by way of *Confession*, is sufficient, in all Instances of Importance, to shew in *what Sense* these Scriptures are understood.

THE *first* is very favourable to the *Deists*, as adding but one Article more to their *Creed*, to render their Faith compleat. And that is, That to their Belief of a God, &c. they add their Belief of the Authority of Scripture. But every one will see, that this is, in the Consequence of it, destructive to Religion. There may be not only a *Profession*, but a general *Conviction* that the Scriptures are the Word of God, where there is *gross Ignorance*, or a *stiff Denial* of the great and Fundamental Articles of Faith. And the Primitive Churches, long before the time of *Constantine*, not only debar'd *Hereticks* the Communion of the Faithful, but denied that Privilege to adult *Catechumens*, 'till after a general Conviction and Acknowledgement of the Truth of Christianity, they were well instructed in the Doctrines of the Gospel. Besides, when Men peremptorily refuse

* *Authentick Account, Advice. 4. Pag. 8.*

to give any other *Witness* of their *Soundness in the Faith*, but that *the Bible is their Religion*; as this gives no credible *Security* that they do not hold *damnable Errors*, it may be greatly suspected that they will not subscribe even the *Bible* itself, but with *SOME EXCEPTIONS*. But be this as it will, Christianity is not yet brought so very low, as that any Professors of it will venture to say *directly*, *There are no Errors in Doctrine that will warrant or oblige a Christian Congregation to withdraw from, or refuse Communion to such as maintain and defend them*, but a positive Denial of the *Letter of Scripture*. And if this be not said, it must be allow'd, that the bare owning the *Letter of Scripture*, is not a *sufficient Pledge* of a Man's *Soundness in the Faith*, or a Profession that *visibly* distinguishes between the *sound*, and *unsound*.

THE *second* Supposition, That a bare repeating the Words of Scripture, by way of *Confession*, is sufficient, in all Instances of Importance, to shew in *what Sense* these Scriptures are understood; is manifestly absurd, and should be pass'd over by me as such, but that a Passage in the * *first* part of the Reply of your Committee, may, as coming from such Hands, be thought worthy of some Remark.

THESE Gentlemen, after an Attempt to shew that *Heresies* may be detected, and the *Corrupters* of Scripture made sensible of their Errors by a Re-

* Reply to the *Subscribing Ministers REASONS*, *Page 17.*

petition of the Words of Scripture, without using any other *Ways of speaking* ; go on to answer an Objection of the *Subscribers*. “ *Let the Subscribers,*” say they, *put in here, and they will tell us, that barely to repeat the Words of Scripture, is not to explain the SENSE of them, or to satisfy others how we understand them.* (And did ever any Mortal, but a *Non-Subscriber*, think otherwise ?) They reply “ *This is not altogether true ; unless our Brethren will set aside that old Rule, that Scripture is the best Expofitor of Scripture : For allowing this, then repeating the Words of one Text, will explain the Words of another ; and two places judiciously laid together as Premises, will best explain a Third, that only mentions the Conclusion. In such Instances as these, barely to repeat the Words of Scripture, may be fufficient to explain the Sense of them, and to satisfy others how we understand them.*”

THAT Scripture is the best Expofitor of Scripture, we allow to be a good, as well as an old Rule ; and are willing, in more Instances, to keep to old Rules, and ancient approv'd Ways of speaking, as not being very fond of *Novelties* in Matters of Faith, which require new Rules of interpreting Scripture ; such as the *Committee* have here coin'd. For they are mistaken if they think that their Rule is the same with that good old Rule : The Meaning of which, when divested of its *Metaphor*, is this. That by collating one or more places of Scripture with others, the obscure with the more plain, we shall best arrive at the Sense of them. Thus when any high *Figures of Speech* are us'd,

as

as when God is said to have *Hands, Feet, Eyes, Ears, Nostrils, human Passions and Appetites*; or when the *Phraseology* is *ambiguous*, or refers to ancient *Forms and Customs* now out of use; or when Things of great Importance, are but *sparingly* mention'd, or hinted at; such places are to be *interpreted*, and their Meaning to be fetch'd from those *Scriptures*, that speak of the same Things more *openly, fully, and without a Figure*. In no other Sense is *Scripture the Expositor of Scripture*. And can this be done without *Discourse*. silent, or express'd? Can there be *Discourse* without *Ratiocination*, in collecting the *united Sense* of several Texts put together, and in raising proper *Inferences* from them? Or can that *united Sense*, and those *Inferences* be convey'd to the Minds of others, whom we may be concern'd to *satisfy*, without using *other Ways of speaking*, than a *bare Repetition* of those Words, whose Meaning is enquir'd after?

To be free with you, *Sir*, your new Rule of Interpretation is, in my Judgment, a mere *Jargon*; a jumble of Words not very *judiciously* laid together. And I wish that *you*, or any other of the learned *Gentlemen* concern'd, would but apply your general Rule to a particular Instance, especially the *Doctrine* of the TRINITY, that we might be able to guess of its Success; and whether by a *bare Repetition* of the Words of Scripture, relating to that *Doctrine*, you can *satisfy others*, that you are neither *Arians*, nor *Socinians*, nor *Sabelians*, nor Disciples of *Dr. Clark*, but that you take the Scriptures in the *Catholick Sense*. For my

my own part, I cannot apprehend, how your repeating *one Text* of Scripture, a *thousand times* over, can explain *another*, so as to satisfy me how you understand *either*. Since the Query will be how you understand that *very Text*, which you bring to notify your Sense of the other. Nor can I see how *two places*, how judiciously soever they may be laid together as *Premises*, can best explain a *Third*, that only mentions the *Conclusion*; since still I may be at a loss how you understand that *very Third*. If I consider it barely as a *Consequence*, I know what to make of it. But if I regard it as an *independent Text* of Scripture, the reciting two other Texts, can never signify in what Sense you take the *Third*.

FOR Instance; the bare repeating all the Texts in the Bible, by way of Confession, can be no reasonable Satisfaction to another, how I understand this Proposition, *the Word was made Flesh*: Whether I take *Logos* the WORD, *Hypostatically*, for a *divine Person*; or in the *Sabellian* Sense, for the λόγος ἰδιαιτός, the *internal Reason of God*, making the *Word* that was made *Flesh*, only an *Attribute* of the Father; or whether, with some *Fanaticks*, I do not mean by it the λόγος προειρημένος, the *Word which God spake*. Thus the most apposite Texts I can produce, may, unless I use other Ways of speaking, which the Rule of the Committee excludes, leave him still in doubt, what I intend by the Term *Flesh*; whether the *entire Humanity*, or the *Material* part of Man only; for the *Word* is used for *either*; not to mention that

it

it sometimes signifies the *Corruption*, or *Vitiosity* of our Nature, as subjected to Sin, and Vanity, and Death. Nor is it the *bare repeating* of Scripture can *satisfy* any, whether by being *made* Flesh, I understand a being *converted* into it, or only *united* with it. The same may be said of that leading Proposition, *The Word was God*. It is impossible without *human Words*, to satisfy others who are not content with mere *Sounds*, whether I understand it in the *Socinian*, *Arian*, *Sabellian*, or *Catholic* Sense. And the Reason is obvious, because *my Sense* of those *very Texts* I bring to illustrate *this*, remains to be specify'd. So that there is an *endless Circle* in this way of *satisfying others* how we understand the Scriptures. And that *Cause* must needs be *defenceless* which cannot be supported but by such *palpable Absurdities*.

It is true, there is no guarding against *Deceit* or *Prevarication*. Persons may act *disingeniously* in using the *Words of God*, or the *Words of Men*. They may *subscribe* Articles of Faith (for to *that* the *Committee* refers) which they *believe not*. They may agree with *others* in the *same Sound* of Words, and collusively *profess* an Agreement, when they *consciously* differ from them in their *inward Persuasions*. Or they may studiously make use of Words, which *they know* are taken in quite *opposite* Meanings; and so by appearing to say the *same Thing* with *two Parties* of different Sentiments, proclaim to the World that they are for a *Latitude* of Thought, and look upon it as a *Matter indifferent* which Persuasion a Man is of. But after all

it is possible to express the *real united Sense* of Scripture concerning the great Articles of Faith in Words of such a *determinate* Meaning, that whoever professes his *Assent* to them, ought to be reputed to take the Scriptures in that *precise* Meaning, till by a *contrary Profession*, he makes the *contrary* to appear. Whereas it is an eternal Contradiction to Reason and good Sense, as well as to the Experience of all Ages, to suppose that in a *controverted* Point of Doctrine, as the Doctrine of the ever Blessed Trinity now is, the *bare* owning or *reciting* the Words of Scripture relating to it, is a sufficient Evidence of a Man's Soundness in the Faith, or a reasonable Satisfaction to others in *what Sense* he takes those Scriptures.

It is not therefore to the Purpose to ask, 'Are the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ—*more liable to be wrong interpreted*—than the Words of Men?' It is too manifest that they are actually wrested to Men's Destruction, and to *patronize* damnable Doctrines. Nor is the *bare repeating* of them any manner of Proof that they are not so wrested. Consequently the *bare owning* the express Declarations of Scripture, is a Profession that does not *visibly* distinguishing between those who hold the Faith, and those who hold dangerous Errors contrary to it. Shall we then say, that a Man cannot in any *Form of sound Words*, make a Profession which shall thus *visibly* distinguish him from those who err in Fundamentals, or hold destructive Errors? This will not be pretended; it being the same as to say, that we cannot *certain-*

ly know what the Christian Faith is, in Things necessary. But perhaps it will be said that Christian Churches ought not to make any such *discriminative* Profession ; nor to insist on any such *Criterion* of a Man's Soundness in the Faith, as will *visibly* distinguish him from a *Socinian*, or other *Hereticks*. Let the *Non-Subscribers* say so, if they will ; and perhaps we may come to know at last where to find them.

DOUBTLESS the *Words* which the Holy Ghost teacheth were well chosen ; nor did the *Subscribers* ever insinuate that they were *not*. They are every way sufficient, and were most proper to answer the *End* of a Revelation ; which was not given to mere speaking Animals, but to intelligent Beings. But it is downright Nonsense to say, that *barely* to repeat these Words, without other *Ways* of speaking, may satisfy another *how* I understand them, or *whether* I understand them at all, or *whether* the Judgment I form concerning them is not a *gross Perversion* of them : Unless we will say also that the Declarations of Scripture are of such a Nature, that it is impossible for Men not to understand them *truly*, or to put *different* and *contradictory* Meanings upon them. This Rule therefore of the *Committee* can be but of little use in *detecting* and *opposing* any *Hereses* against the Faith, or in satisfying others *how* we understand the Scriptures.

HOWEVER, let us hear them speak farther to this Point. “ *Do not the Scriptures, say they*
“ *declare*

“ * declare that they are profitable for all Things
 “ that may make the Man of God perfect, thoroughly
 “ furnish’d to every good Work? 2 Tim. III. 16, 17.
 “ Now as it is one part of the Work of a Man of
 “ GOD, to convince Gain-Sayers, the Scripture alone
 “ must be sufficient to furnish him for this good Work ;
 “ or otherwise their Witness of themselves is false’.
 The Reader is to observe that this is an Argument
 brought to prove, that “ if Men have perverted or
 “ corrupted the Scriptures, they ought to be made sensible
 “ of their Crime from the Scriptures themselves ; and
 “ not be obliged to subscribe OTHER WAYS OF
 “ SPEAKING, than those of Scripture, for a TES-
 “ TIMONY that they do not forsake or wrong the
 “ Scriptures”. And upon this they found their
 Rule, That barely to repeat the Words of Scripture,
 is enough to satisfy others how we understand them.

BUT the Gentlemen of the Committee could
 hardly pitch upon a Text worse applied to sup-
 port their Notion. The Scriptures are profitable
 to all the Purposes there mention’d by the Apostle,
 by our making our Profit of them. But how is
 this done? Doubtless by exercising our Reason
 about them. And if by Reasoning, then there is
 an absolute Necessity of using other than Scrip-
 ture Terms, and of collecting and applying Con-
 sequences from Scripture, in order to make them
 profitable to ourselves, or to convince others. The
 Scripture alone is sufficient to furnish a Man of
 GOD for the Work of convincing Gain-Sayers, or

leaving them *without Excuse*. But did ever a *Man of God*, or a *Man of common Sense*, attempt to do this by a *bare Repetition* of Texts, without giving his Sense of them in *other Words*, and drawing evident *Conclusions* from them?

OUR Saviour silenc'd the *Sadducees* from Scripture, without having recourse to any *other Writings*, or the *Authority* of *human Decisions*: But how? Was it by barely *repeating* the Words of *Moses*? They would have rejected that Method of Conviction with Contempt; and tell him that they never *contradicted*, nor refus'd to *own* the express Words of their *Legislator*: But he silenc'd them by *logical Reasoning*, or urging a plain Consequence upon them. In like Manner the Apostles prov'd out of the Scriptures, such Articles of Faith as were no where *literally* express'd in Scripture. Nor do they scruple to affirm, that the *Prophets* do *shew*, *declare* and *speak*, what their Words *import*, by a good and lawful *Consequence*. And when they engage in the Work of convincing *Gain-Sayers*; or when they *rebuke*, or *exhort* to Duty, they do it in a regular way of *Discourse*, and raising *Inferences* from all the Principles, and Topicks of Persuasion. So that tho' the '*Scriptures were certainly design'd to be a standing Rule of Faith to the Christian Church, and that upon the Prospect and Supposition of Mens perverting the Words, and corrupting the Sense of it*'; (it should be *them*) yet as they were not design'd to be a *Standard* of mere *Sounds*, or a *Rule* of Agreement in the *same Sounds*; but to be a *Standard* of *Truth*, and a *Rule* of *Faith*, (which is an internal rational

nal Persuasion of Truths divinely revealed). So there is an absolute Necessity of using *other Words*, if ever we would explain the *Sense* of Scripture, or *satisfy* others, in a Point of Faith, *what* it is we believe. Nor was such a *Solecism* in Sense, ever heard of, till the serving a *Turn* made it needful, That *barely repeating* the Words of Scripture, could answer *either* of these Purposes.

THE Committee are here pleas'd to refer us to their pacifick *Advices*. 'If it does appear that any *contradicts the plain and express Declarations of Scripture*, we shew in our *Advices* what our *Judgment is concerning him*'. Now their Judgment is this, * That no Man is to be censur'd, *because he consents not to human Forms or Phrases; but then only*——when it appears that he *contradicts, or refuses to own, the plain and express Declarations of Holy Scripture*'. But then (as if they design'd never to be understood) they no where tell us what they mean by *contradicting* these express Declarations; unless it be the same with *not owning* them. If they mean *contradicting*, or *not owning* the *Letter* of Scripture, they exempt all from *Censure* but *Anti-Scripturists*. So that neither *Arians*, nor *Socinians* are to be censur'd, according to this Rule: For they all profess to own the *plain and express Declarations of Holy Scripture*, and pretend that *theirs* is the *Scripture Doctrine*. But if they will grant, which does not appear

* *Authentick Account* Pag. 8.

from their *Advices*, that a Man may be *censur'd*, as not holding the *Faith*, who contradicts the *Sense* of Scripture, tho' he owns the *Letter* thereof; I would then ask, how he can be made *sensible* or *convicted* of this, without being obliged to use other *Ways of speaking*, than those of Scripture, for a *Testimony* that he does not forsake or wrong the *Scriptures*? And if they will not grant that a Man ought to be *censur'd* who owns the *Letter* of Scripture, whatever *Sense* he puts upon it, to what Purpose have they amus'd the World, by telling us in their *Preliminary Clauses*, * ' That they ' are clearly of ' Opinion, there are Errors in Doctrine, of that Nature, as will even oblige a Christian Congregation to ' withdraw from such as maintain and defend them. ' And that the People have a right to judge for ' themselves, what those Errors are, and when they ' are so taught and propagated' ? Again, If a Man may not be *censur'd* as holding such Errors, whilst he readily owns the *literal Text*, what comes of the *Committee's* Concession, in the place now before us, ' No doubt the *Sense* of Scripture, and not ' the *Sound of Words* is Scripture'? If this be true, he who contradicts and disowns the *Sense*, contradicts and disowns the *Scripture itself*. Yet, according to their Judgment, this Person ought not to be *censur'd*, because he owns the *express Words* of Scripture; and they tell us, in the same Paragraph, that other *Ways of speaking*, must not be urg'd upon him, for a *Testimony* that he does not

* *Authentick Account*, Pag 5. 6.

SCRIPTURE-CONSEQUENCES. 151

forsake, or wrong the Scriptures. And indeed all Process in a Case of this Nature is at an End, if barely to repeat the Words of Scripture, is all that ought to be insisted on, by way of *Confession*, to satisfy others how we understand them.

BEFORE I leave the *Committee*, I shall present the Reader with another Passage of theirs, not unlike what we have already examin'd. * ' *We are sure of an Agreement with all Christian Churches, not only in the Doctrine of the Trinity, but every other Doctrine concerning which they believe a-right, when we keep strictly to the Expressions of Scripture*'. Wonderful! Who ever doubted, but that by keeping to *precise Words*, we may be sure we are agreed in the *same Sounds*, with those who *precisely* keep to the *same Words*; allowing only for a Difference in the *Tone*, or *Way of Pronunciation*? But if they mean *Agreement* in the *same Faith*; then I am sure, what they here alledge is a manifest Absurdity, as ever was palm'd upon the World by a *Committee* of learned *Divines*. For it is in the nature of the Thing impossible, we can be sure, that any particular *Church*, or *Man* (not excepting the *Polonian Brethren*) believes *a-right* in the *Doctrine* of the TRINITY, or any *other Doctrine*, unless we know in what *Sense* they take the Expressions of Scripture relating to it. And this we can never know, without *other Declarations* of Faith, than *those Words* of Scripture, the *Sense* of which is the

* Reply to the Subscribing-Ministers REASONS, Pag. 30.

Thing in Question. Nor can we be *otherwise sure* of an Agreement with them in *Doctrine*. What does it signify if we are agreed in owning the same *literal Text*, with *Jesuits, Socinians, Anthropomorphites, Familists, Quakers*, and the whole Tribe of *Hereticks and Libertines*, who all profess to keep *strictly to the Expressions of Scripture*, and are content to repeat *Text for Text* with us, as long as we please? What mutual Satisfaction can this give, that we all hold the same *Faith and Doctrine*? None at all: Unless we regard the *Doctrines of the Gospel*, as *Gallio* did the *Questions of the Law*; care for none of those Things, which will hardly pass for a good Qualification in *Ministers of the Gospel*.

THE *Scripture* is, no doubt, the *Center of Unity*. † But it is the *Scripture* as revealing the *Mind and Will of God*, and not the *mere Letter of Scripture*, abstracted from the real determinate *Sense and Scope of the Holy Ghost*, that can be so called. Words without *Meaning*, (which *Meaning* must be known, and *profess'd*,) can never be a *Center of Unity* in divine Matters, to those who offer unto God a *Reasonable Service*. This is not the *Unity of the Spirit*, but of the *Letter*, without *Spirit*, and without *Life*. Nor can it ever be a *Bond of Gospel Peace* (which cannot subsist without *Truth*) except to those whose *Peace* is a *spiritual Lethargy*. Agreement therefore in the same *Scripture Words or Sounds*, without a declared

† *Idem*

Sense and Meaning, is so far from being ‘*the only Way of agreeing in Declarations of Faith, that shall render the Christian Churches safe and happy*’ †; that it is the readiest way, as far as human Views can reach, to destroy all *visible* Distinction between the *Churches of Christ*, and mere *Worldly Assemblies*.

HAVING thus examin’d some Positions of your Committee, which might be thought to lie as just *Prejudices* against my *Argument*; I shall,

II. *Secondly*, With the like Freedom, give you my Thoughts of what you have offer’d *singly* on the same Head. Your Principal *Objection* against what I have laid down, is this, That it ‘*supposes the Scripture makes more necessary to a Man’s being a Christian, than it does itself declare, which is to you absurd*’.

I know not whether you have forgot here, That *more* is necessary to a Man’s being a Christian indeed, than is requisite to a *credible Profession*, in *foro Ecclesiæ*, or, in the Judgment of Men. This however, I would observe, that the Word *declare* is ambiguous. I. If you mean by it, the same with *reveal*, then my Argument supposes no such Thing as you imagine. For I have already prov’d, That just and lawful *Consequences* from Scripture, *truly are*, and have the *Authority* of a *divine Revelation*. And you yourself affirm, That the Doctrine of ‘*a future State of Happiness for good Men, was a Part of the divine Revelation made*

‘ in the Books of Moses, because God therein declar’d
 ‘ himself the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of
 ‘ Jacob after their several Deaths. Thus according
 to St. Paul, those very Patriarchs, by confessing that
 they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth, DE-
 CLARED plainly that they sought a Country. Not
 That from whence they came, for they had Opportu-
 nity to have return’d ; therefore they plainly DE-
 CLARED that they desir’d a better Country, that is,
 an heavenly, Heb. XI. 13---16. Where, I think,
 we have a whole Succession of Consequences ; and
 the Fathers are said plainly to declare, what only
 arose by a Chain of Inferences out of their Confes-
 sion. * In like manner, GOD, plainly declares,
 what-

* Dr. Manton infers from these Passages, I. “ That that Doctrine
 “ that is not express’d in plain Words of Scripture, yet is de-
 “ duced thence by just Consequences, is a SCRIPTURE-DOC-
 “ TRINE. II. That in all Controversies, and Decisions of
 “ Cases, genuine Deductions are not an obscure Proof”. Then he
 observes, “ The Arians reject the Consubstantiality of Christ, and
 “ the Trinity, because they are not Scripture Words. The Donatists
 “ call’d Augustine not the Christian, but the Logician, because he
 “ argued from Consequences in disputing with them. And so now
 “ a-days in the Controversy about Infant Baptism, they require
 “ plain Scripture for it. We prove it, by Consequence, that
 “ they are in Covenant, and therefore have a Right to the Seal
 “ of the Covenant. They are Disciples, Members of the Church,
 “ and therefore have a Right to the Privileges of the Church.
 “ And so for the Sabbath. We must not instruct God, how to
 “ set down his Mind. The Jews say, if CHRIST had been
 “ the true Messiah, he would have come in such a Way, as all
 “ his own Country-men would have known him. So will Men say,
 “ had this been the Mind of God, it would have been more plain-
 “ ly and expressly revealed in Scripture. Thus will FOOLISH
 “ MEN give Laws to God. And then concludes, with these re-
 markable

whatever his Word *manifestly imports*, tho' it be not delivered in so many Terms.

2. BUT if you mean *declare* in a more restrain'd Sense; then I doubt you'll repent your calling it an Absurdity, to *suppose the Scripture makes*
more

"*markable Words*, ' If a Doctrine can be deduc'd from Scripture, "it is AS MUCH, AS IF IT WERE IN EXPRESS "WORDS OF SCRIPTURE". Vol. 3. Pag. 305, 306. Thus this excellent Person. And I very much question whether the *Non-Subscribers*, can, among all the Divines of the *Reform'd Churches* (excepting among the *Socinians*) name any one Person of such an establish'd Character, for a clear Judgment, and extraordinary Knowledge in the Scriptures, as well as for eminent Piety, who says the same Thing with *themselves* in Relation to Scripture-Consequences. I shall here add, what another learned Man, who was a famous *Casuistical Divine*, and a Professor of Divinity, says on the same Texts. "This deducing of Consequences from the Profession "of the *Patriarchs*, teacheth us, I. So to read the Scriptures as "we may mark, not only what is spoken, but also what is there "by imported by *Consequence*. II. That what is imported by a "Speech, is a plain DECLARATION of the Mind of the "Speaker, and not an *obscure* Deduction as *MOCKERS* call it". Mr. Dixon's Exposition of *Heb. iv. 13, 14, 15, 16*.

It will not perhaps offend some Readers, if to these Testimonies, I add, That of the great *Rutherford*, in his Survey of the *Spiritual Anti-Christ*, against *Familists* and *Antinomians*, Pag. 30. "*Antinomians*, he observes, say, Christ makes no use of Logick, "and of logical Consequences, because they are logical, for that "which he saith there, [*Matt. 22.* about the Resurrection of the "Dead] is Scripture, because Christ so saith, not because there "is such logical arguing in the Words". This, if I mistake not, is very like some late Evasions. To which Mr. *Rutherford* answers, thus; 1. "The same way that we argue from an Antecedent to a "Consequent, by natural Logick, so doth Christ. We deny not "but Christ, and the Holy Ghost, in the Evangelist *Matthew*, do "put the Stamp and Impression of Scripture, on natural and senseless arguing from an Antecedent to a Consequent. But it follows well, CHRIST made use of Logick in Scripture Discourses, "therefore human Learning (or Reasoning) is lawful for, and necessary to the opening and understanding of Scripture.

more necessary to a Mans being a Christian, than it does itself literally declare : For you manifestly suppose the same Thing. Your Words are (*Letter Pag. 9. 10.*) ‘ Every one who discerns the Evidence of any Consequences of Truth or Duty from Scripture, is obliged to believe and receive them, as well as the express Declarations of it : He ought to govern himself by his Belief of such Consequences, whether they relate to greater or less Matters.—And even such Deductions from Scripture as only carry probable Evidence to him, yet claim a proportionable Regard. This is a necessary Consequence of Sincerity’. Now, if the Scripture makes Sincerity necessary to a Man’s being a Christian, it will follow that it makes more necessary to be believ’d and done by Christians, or to a Mans being a Christian, than it does itself expressly declare. It makes it necessary for a Man to believe, and govern himself by those Consequences, the Connexion of which with Scripture Principles, he himself discerns. This, you say,

“ II. Whereas *Antinomians* [see *Salmarsh’s* Shadows fleeing away, Pag. 8.] say, Consequences are not Scripture, but darken the Glory of the Gospel, it is clear, Christ calleth this very logical Consequence,——*the Dead shall rise*, by the Name of Scripture——*Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures*——*Have ye not read that which was spoken to you*——Ergo, it was their Unbelief and Dulness that they did not read and understand the Logick of the Holy Ghost. And they ought to have read the Article of the Resurrection, *Exod. 3.* in the Consequence of it, as the Scripture itself. Then he observes, that what is prov’d by Consequence, is said to be written. It is written, and what saith the Scripture. *Isaiah* saith ; *Hosea* saith. III. The Prophets and Apostles almost in every Line use logical Reasoning, from the Nature, from the Cause, the Effect, the Consequent—from Wrath, Life, Reward, Threatnings, Promises”, &c.

is a necessary Consequence of Sincerity. And you elsewhere allow, That the Question is not, what a Man sees, or does not see, but what he ought to see, &c. Nor will you say, that Ignorance even of some Consequential Truths may not be ruinous to Men, where they take not those Steps which SINCERITY dictates. Thus far you are in the right. Which shews the Falseness and Sophistry of that Position of the Socinians, which you, Sir, unwarily espouse; viz. That nothing is necessary to Salvation, or to a Man's being a Christian, that is not *ad literam* in the sacred Text; and that that cannot be necessary, which is prov'd only by Consequence. Either therefore retract your own Concessions; or grant that it is not absurd to suppose the Scripture makes more necessary to a Man's being a sincere Christian, than it does itself expressly mention. Otherwise say plainly, That Sincerity is not necessary to a Man's being a Christian: Or, that what is a necessary Consequence of Sincerity, is not, by the Scriptures made necessary to a Man's being a good Christian.

BUT to let this self-Inconsistency pass among those Infirmities of human Understanding, which you well observe, ought to be allow'd for in some Cases. I cannot think it is an Absurdity, to suppose, or to affirm, That the Scripture makes more necessary even to a credible Profession of Christianity, than it does itself declare in express Words.

For 1st, I should hardly esteem him a credible Professor of the Christian Religion, who should deny that the Scriptures of the New Testament, the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles were given by Inspiration

Inspiration of God, or who should only *suppose* that they may be *his* infallible Word: Who should deny the *Perpetuity* of the two Sacraments, *Baptism* and the *Lord's-Supper*: Or, *Womens* right to this last; or the *Divine Institution* of publick Assemblies of Christians, and of a stated publick *Ministry*, to be continu'd in the Church of Christ, throughout all Ages: and the *Obligation* upon Christians to worship God in such Assemblies. He who should deny all this, is likely to make but a very lame *Profession* of Christianity; and yet neither of *these*, nor yet many *Relative Duties*, which are clear enough from *Scripture*, can be prov'd by plain and expresse *Declarations*, without allowing the Authority of just and lawful *Consequences* from them.

THIS leads me to observe, 2dly, [That some *Consequences* are of such a Nature and *Evidence*, that he, who upon a fair Proposal, denies them, cannot in the true Construction of the Words, be thought to believe the *Scripture-Principles* whence they are evidently deduc'd. He cannot in Reason, be thought to believe that the *Lo G O S* became Man, in all Things like unto us, who shall deny that he assum'd, into Union with himself, a true Body, and a reasonable Soul, of the same Kind and Species with other Mens. Since whatever is of a higher or lower Species cannot be human, or in all Things like us. These *Consequences*, therefore, are of equal Necessity to be believ'd, with their *Premises*. And the *Profession* of them may be justly requir'd as a *Term* of Communion.

This

This is not denied by Mr. *Chillingworth*, who was as great a *Latitudinarian*, as could well consist with his good Sense, and other excellent Qualities. After that famous Declaration, ‘*The BIBLE, “the BIBLE only is the Religion of Protestants”*’. He immediately adds, ‘*Whatsoever else they believe, besides it, and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable CONSEQUENCES of it, well may they hold it as a Matter of Opinion; but as Matter of Faith and Religion, neither can they with Conherence to their own Grounds believe it themselves, nor require the Belief of it of others, without most high and most Schismatical Presumption*’.

* In this celebrated Passage, he distinguishes between *Matters of Faith*, and *Matters of Opinion*. He owns that whatever can be prov’d by a plain Consequence from Scripture, is *Matter of Faith*: That it may be, consistently, regarded as such by Protestants. And that they may require the Profession of it, of others, as a Term of Communion, without any *Schismatical Presumption*. And we may, without Presumption suppose, that he would not have mention’d Consequences in this Place, if he had thought, with the *Non-Subscribers*, that it reflected on the Perfection of Scripture, to assert the Authority of Scripture-Consequences, in stating and deciding Articles of Faith: or if he had thought, that they might, without an abuse of Words, be said to make *the Bible* *their Religion*, who peremptorily say, *That Scripture*

Religion of Protestants, &c. Edit. 5. Pag. 290.

ture-Consequences never can have Authority to determine Men's Faith.

AND now, Sir, to use your own Words, " If what I have offer'd about Scripture-Consequences in general prove true, I think there is no Case wherein it can be more fitly applicable, than in Reference to the Doctrine of the TRINITY". To this therefore,

III. *Thirdly*, Let us particularly apply what hath been said. And here I will crave Leave to make use of your own *Concessions*. For tho' I grant that this is not of all others, the surest Way to make any real Improvements in Knowledge; for one Argument *ad judicium*, may be sometimes better than three *ad hominem*, yet it may have its own proper use in this Controversy, in which I have to do with those who would be accounted *Trinitarians*, in the same Sense in which the *Subscribers* have declar'd themselves to be such.

I have observ'd then, That some Consequences are of such Evidence, that they must stand or fall with their first Principles, in the Apprehension of all who consider them without Prejudice. And consequently that whoever denies them, ought not in Reason, to be supposed, to believe those Principles whence they inevitably spring. Of this kind is what you call a Consequence in the Doctrine of the TRINITY. But I cannot forbear thinking, that you have express'd yourself somewhat confus'dly, if not inconsistently, on this Subject. You distinguish here between the Mat-

ter of your Faith, and something, which you apprehend to be true, but it would seem, is not with you, a Matter of Faith. It may be counted an Injury if I should give your Sense in any other than your own Words, which the Reader may take as follows; Letter, Pag. 22. 23. "I take this
 " occasion to declare my hearty Concurrence with him
 " [the Reverend Mr. Robinson] in the Scriptural
 " Account he has given of this sacred Doctrine in his
 " Part of the late Performance *; and return him
 " my publick Thanks for it; and as many of my Non-
 " Subscribing Brethren as I have consulted, declare
 " themselves of the same Sentiment. I agree with him
 " in the Evidences he has produced out of Scripture
 " for the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of
 " the Spirit; and apprehend that he has given the
 " genuine Sense of most of the Texts he has produced.
 " What he has produc'd upon all the Articles, is the
 " Matter of my Faith. What he has added in the
 " End, Pag. 39. That these three are the one
 " God, the same in Substance or Essence, equal
 " in Power and Glory; (meaning I suppose the
 " the same numerical Essence;) appears indeed to
 " me a just Consequence from Scripture, as far as
 " I allow myself to enter into the Modus of this My-
 " stery. But here I dare not be so positive, because I
 " find not the Scripture so express, as in the Ascription
 " of the Characters of Godhead to Father, Son and
 " Spirit".

* The Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity stated, and defended, by some London Ministers.

I will not stay here, to enquire, *how far you allow yourself to enter into the Modus of this Mystery?* I would however put you in Mind, That the *Characters of Godhead*, which Mr. Robinson has prov'd from Scripture, are given to these *Blessed Three*, are such as admit not of a *Plurality of Gods*, nor of any natural or essential *Subordination of the Son as God, to the Father*, or of the *Holy Spirit to either*. If this be not your *Sense*, what Ambiguity of Speech, or mental Reservation will justify your professing an hearty *Concurrence* with him? And if it be, what solid Reason have you to *distinguish*, as you do, between what you call the *Matter of your Faith*, and that *just Consequence* about which you dare not be so positive? What can this mean? Is it that the *Scripture-Expressions* are the *Matter of your Faith*; but that as for the *Consequence* that arises out of them, tho' it appears *just* to you, yet you regard it only as a *Matter of Opinion*, not as a point of *Faith*? If I have hit upon your Meaning, I would then ask, Whether when you say that the *Scripture-Expressions* are the *Matter of your Faith*, you mean *Scripture-Expressions* as conveying any certain determinate *Meaning*, or no? If it be the *Meaning* of Scripture, and not the mere *Sound* of Words, that is the *Matter of your Faith*, I would farther ask, Whether this be not your *Meaning*? That there is but *one only God*; and that the *highest, most strict, and absolute Characters of Godhead* do belong; and are in Scripture applied to the *Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*? If this is not that *precise Sense* of Scripture which is the *Matter* of
of

of your Faith, you differ as widely from Mr. Robinson, and the rest of the *Subscribing Brethren*, as from *Pole to Pole*. Nor can this be rationally suppos'd to be the *Matter of your Faith*, if you deny, or doubt of, the *equal Certainty* and Evidence of this indubitable Consequence, *That these three are one God, &c.*

I would not be understood to charge you with Unsoundness in the Faith. I only charge you with *Inconsistency*. And I must be allow'd to support that Charge, not only as an Expression of my Friendship for yourself, but for the sake of the *Truth*, the Sacredness of which may be lessened in the Esteem of others, by such a way of speaking. And,

1. I dare venture to be positive in this, That whoever denies, doubts of, or regards it only as a probable *Hypothesis*, That *these three are one God*, must, in the same Degree, deny, doubt of, or regard it only as a probable Opinion, That the Characters of the *true eternal Godhead*, are, without Limitation, applied to the *Son* or *Holy Ghost*. Unless we suppose him to be a *Trisheist* in the grossest Sense of that Word, or to assert *more Gods than one*, equally *supreme*, and *independent* one of another; which is Blasphemy and Contradiction too. I appeal, *Sir*, from your *Letter* to your *Understanding*, whether you can conceive it possible for a Man to believe, That there is but *one God*, and that the incommunicable *Characters* and *Perfections* of the eternal Godhead, are applied,

and do belong to these *Blessed Three*, in the same absolute and supreme Sense, and yet not be equally assured, *That these three are one God!* Was there ever an Instance of a Person whose Mind was so turn'd, as to say the *Premises*, here, were the *Matter of his Faith*, but he demur'd, or was not so positive, as to the *Conclusion*? Do you think that Dr. Clark, or Mr. Whiston, would ever talk at this rate? You must first imagine them divested of common Sense. And therefore, all who deny that *these three are one God*, must be either such as deny all *Divinity* of the *Son* and *Spirit*, as *Deists*, *Mahometans*, &c. Or, such as make the *Son* *Subordinate* and *Inferior* to the *Father*, in his divine Nature and Attributes; and likewise also the *Holy Ghost*. In a Word, this *Consequence*, these three are one God, is as certain and unavoidable, from the *Oneness* of God, and the Ascription of the highest Characters of *Godhead* to the *Father*, the *Word*, and the blessed *Spirit*, as any *Conclusion* founded on Mathematical Demonstration: And so obvious to the common Sense and Reason of Mankind, that whoever doubts of it, must, in Proportion, doubt of the *Premises* also.

2. There is an equal Evidence of their being *one in Nature, Substance, or Essence*. For tho' we do not distinctly know what the *Essence* of God is, or of created Spirits, or of Matter itself, with which we are so conversant. Yet this we know that the *Unity* of God is an *Unity* of *Nature*; and that there cannot be *divers Natures, Essences, or Substances* in the *Godhead*. So that if *these Three*
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are *One God*, they must necessarily be of *one Essence* or *Substance*; unless we suppose the *Deity* to be compounded of *different Natures*. This also is obvious to every Capacity. It is sufficient that we can *distinguish* the *Essences* of Things (as of *Matter* and *Spirit*) by the known incompatible *Properties* that belong unto them, and flow from them. Thus it is demonstrable that the *Essence* or *Substance* of the *intelligent Spirit* in Man, is *different* from the *Essence* or *Substance* of unintelligent *Matter*, that is void of all *active*, or of *rational Powers*. And yet we cannot adequately define what the *Essence* of either is. It is also demonstrable that *God* is a Being, substantially differing from *all others*, from every *made*, *deriv'd*, *dependent*, or *limited* Being. This we know by the incommunicable *Attributes* and *Perfections* of the divine Nature, which can only belong to that *one Nature*, and are but *improperly* distinguish'd from it; for the *Absolute Attributes* of God do constitute the divine *Essence*. So that if the *Word* and *Spirit*, differ *substantially* from the Father, they must differ *toto cælo*, and cannot have the same divine *Perfections*. Whereas on the other hand, if they are, together with the Father, the one only living and true God, they must be the same in *Substance* or *Essence*; otherwise the *Godhead* substantially differs from itself. To say therefore that they are not of *one Substance*, is to say that they are not *one God*: As to say *They are not one God*, is either to deny the *Unity* of God, or the true, *eternal Power* and *Godhead* of the *Son* or *Spirit*. And if they are of *one Substance* or *Essence*,

it will not be disputed that the divine Persons are equal in Power and Glory, and all other divine Properties belonging to that one Essence.

3. As for the Word *Person*, none lay a greater Stress upon it than the *New-Methodists* or modern *Arians* themselves. To deny the distinct *personality* of Father, Son and Spirit, is, with them, a *Heresy* of the most malignant Influence, that tears to Pieces the whole Scheme of *Christianity*. However, it is frequently demanded of the *Orthodox*, What they mean by the Word *Person*, when they assert That in the Unity of the Godhead, there be Three Persons of one Substance, Power and Eternity, &c. ? But those who put such Questions cannot but know, that it is used to signify a real *Distinction* between the Three, as to the Manner of their Subsistence in the same Nature ; And to support the Propriety of different Ascriptions to them in the Oeconomy of Providence, and of Man's Redemption. What their distinct Manner of Subsistence in the same Godhead is, God has not revealed, nor do we pretend to explain. But that there is a *Distinction*, the Scriptures plainly declare, in ascribing such different Actions and Characters to them, as do necessarily import it. If any other Word could be thought on, more proper to signify such a *Distinction*, we are as ready as any to imbrace it. But of this we despair. And therefore we think we have good Reason to insist upon the Word *Person* ; not only because it has been always used among Christians, but because it has a clear Foundation in Scripture, where we
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read of the *Person* * of the Father, *Heb.* 1. 3. and of the *Person of Christ*, as *Dr. Whitby* renders *2 Cor.* 4. 6. † And where such *Properties* and *Operations* are *distinctly* ascrib'd to *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit*, as cannot without a manifest Absurdity be affirm'd of mere *Names*, *Modes*, or *Oeconomies*; but only of *Persons*. And yet the absolute *Unity* of the *divine Nature*, obliges us to take the Word *Person* here in a more qualify'd or restrain'd Sense, than when we apply it to *three Men*. Briefly, we intend by it a real *Distinction*. That there is a *Distinction*, such as is sufficient to found their *Personalities* upon, is a Matter of Faith; because the Scriptures do plainly reveal it. What the eternal Grounds of *that Distinction* are, or, *how* they *subsist distinctly* in the same numerical Essence; this we have no distinct Conception of, nor is the *Belief* of it, *requir'd* of us. We shall then be able to comprehend it, when we are able to *find out the Almighty unto Perfection*. If any will acknowledge such a *Distinction* between these *Three*, as is necessary to support the different Actions ascrib'd to them in Scripture, and to secure these divine Honours which we *respectively* owe unto them, in our practical Regards, preserving and owning, at the same Time, their *Unity* of Nature; we shall not censure him as *Heterodox* or *Unsound*, if he uses any other Term than *Person*, (or makes use of a *Periphrasis*) to signify it by. But to deny all

* χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ.]
χρῆς.

† ἐν ἀποστολῇ ἰνσ

Distinction between the *Father*, the *Word*, and *Spirit*, or to make that *Distinction* to consist only in mere *Names*, which is the *Sabellian* Herefy; we look upon as inconsistent with the *Scripture-Doctrine* of the *Trinity*. And if *Mens* refusing to own the *Word Person*, be intended as a Cloke to cover their Denial of a *true Distinction*, they ought not to be conniv'd at.

THUS I have endeavour'd to shew, That some *Consequences* are of equal Necessity to be believed with their *Premises*. Because in the Nature of Things, the *Connexion* is so necessary and manifest, that they must stand or fall together in the Judgment and Apprehensions of all unprejudic'd Persons. The Application of this to the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity* proves, That if it be necessary to a *credible Profession*, to believe in *one only God*, and to believe that the *Characters of Godhead* (to keep to your Terms) are in the *strictest Sense* ascribed to the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Holy Ghost* (which the *Non-Subscribers* would have the World conclude, they do believe) it must be equally necessary to believe, That these Three are one God, of the same adorable Nature, and Attributes. In a Word, it is plainly demonstrable, that either they are one God; or, the Name and Attributes of God do not belong to the Son and Spirit in a *strict Sense*, or, there are more Gods than One.

IV. Fourthly, I shall conclude this Chapter with answering one or two *Objections* more, that
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may perhaps be urg'd against this way of Reasoning.

I. **SOME** may perhaps apply here, what you allege, *Letter, Pag. 15*. That if this *Consequence* were of equal Importance to be believed, with the express Declarations of Scripture whence it is infer'd, ' *God would have taken the same way as he has done for other Things, to give an immediate and express Revelation of it, which would have reach'd every one.*' I answer; Those Texts which assert the *Oneness* or *Unity* of God; and those, which without any *Qualification* or *Restriction*, ascribe all the Characters of Divinity, the incommunicable Perfections of the eternal Godhead, to these *sacred Three*; do as fully and plainly reveal that they are *one God*, as if that Proposition was *literally* contain'd in the Text itself. To deny this, to doubt of it, upon Supposition that such Characters are, in Scripture, ascrib'd to these *Three*; is as ridiculous to Reason, as if one should say, he who affirms *twice ten* makes *twenty*, does not affirm that the number *twenty* includes *twice ten*.

I confess, our Adversaries, who deny that the Characters of *Supremacy*, *Independency*, absolute *Necessity of Being*, &c. (they might as well say *Godhead*;) belong to the *Son* and *Spirit*, are consistent with themselves in denying them to be *one God* with the Father; tho' their Positions are destructive of our holy Faith. But to grant that the Scriptures are express in asserting as above; and yet to insist on a more explicit Revelation of

their being one God, or to doubt whether the Scripture Evidence of *this* be as full and clear, as any Words could make it; or whether it be as necessary to believe this *Consequence*, as it is to believe the original Declarations, that manifestly import it, betrays a Weakness, if not a Prejudice, which cannot be rationally accounted for. Is it thus the *Perfection* of Scripture is to be maintain'd! Cannot we believe the *Sufficiency* of *that*, unless we suppose that its *plain Evidence* can reach no farther than the bare *Letter*! I should be ashamed to oppose any Argument to a Principle so absurd to Reason, and so inconsistent with the Design of Revelation; but that the disagreeable Task is imposed on me.

You know very well, that not only the Socinian Writers, but Dr. Clark, and all the Advocates of the New Scheme, (I think we need not except Mr. Peirce) declare it as their unanimous Sentiment, *That the Word GOD in Scripture, no where signifies the Person of the Holy Ghost*. Now, supposing this were true, (as it is not †) would it there-

† *Act. 5. 3, 4.* But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine Heart to lie to the HOLY GHOST? Thou hast not lied unto Man, but unto GOD. Now, if the Apostle's Reasoning be just, the Holy Ghost must needs be, and 'is here called GOD. For there is an express Opposition between lying unto Men, and lying unto the Holy Ghost; Whereas there is no Opposition at all between lying to the Holy Ghost, and lying to God; on the contrary Ananias, by lying unto the Holy Ghost, lied unto God, that is, unto him who is God. The HOLY GHOST in this Place, signifies a divine Person, or else it signifies a Power, Efficacy, or Gift of God: It

therefore follow that the Scriptures do not *reveal* his *Divinity*? Or that it is not of any great *Importance* whether Men acknowledge his *Divinity* or not? By no means. If what our Adversaries boast of with respect to the *Holy Ghost*, were *really true* both of the *Son* and *Spirit*; if neither were called *GOD* in Scripture, it would nevertheless be necessary to believe their *Godhead*, if but the *other* appropriate *Titles* of God, and those *divine Attributes* that distinguish the *Deity* from all other Beings, were (as they really are) ascribed to them. And those very Gentlemen who deny that the Word *God* in Scripture, signifies the Person of the *Holy Ghost*, do yet allow him to be *God* in the same *inferior* Sense, in which they allow *Jesus Christ* to be God; only with *one* Degree more of *Subordination*. But, Sir, if the plain indubitable *Evidence* of Scripture, can, in Matters of Faith, reach no farther than the *Letter* of the sacred *Text*; and if it be *disputable* (as it is actually *disputed*) whether the Term *God*, be any where in Scripture applied to the *Holy Ghost*, is not this the ready Way to tempt Christians to deny the *Divinity* of the blessed Spirit, whose *Temples* we are,

It is absurd to say it signifies this last; for *Ananias* could not lie to a mere *Gift* or *Operation*. But he lied unto the *Holy Ghost* himself, whose Power rested on the Apostles. Now, in lying to the *Holy Ghost*, he lied *not* unto Men, but unto *GOD*. Nor did he otherwise lie unto God, but as he lied unto the *Holy Ghost* himself, in Distinction from any Efficacy, Virtue, Operation, or Gift of God, to which he could not lie. Whence it plainly follows, that it is the *Holy Ghost himself*, who is here called *God*; and that in the most absolute Sense.

to whom we are *dedicated* in *Baptism*; in whose *Name*, and by whose *Grace* and *Authority* Pardon of Sin, and eternal Salvation, with all the other Blessings of the Covenant are offer'd, and assured unto us? May that Holy Spirit, who, as of old in the *Wilderness*, is now also, *tempted* and *provok'd* by the *Unbelief* of Men, prevent the Spreading and Influence of Principles fatal to Christianity!

* II. If it be enquired, who is *Judge*, when a *Consequence* from Scripture is attended with *such Evidence*, and is of *such Importance*?

I answer, That as God has not appointed any visible infallible Interpreter of the *Sense* of Scripture *Words*; neither has he appointed any *such Judge* of the *Consequences* that arise out of them: so that every Man must see with his own Eyes, and be allowed a *Judgment* of Discretion, as accountable to our supreme LORD and Master Jesus Christ.

BUT it does not follow, that we must not in *any Case* judge what *Consequences* ought to be regarded by *others* as true: or, that we ought not in *any Case* to *Censure* others as *unsound*, for refusing to be determin'd by *Scripture-Consequences*. For by Parity of Reason, we must not, in *any Case*, judge what is the real *Sense* of Scripture *Words*, so as to *censure* those as *unsound*, who shall take them in a *contradictory* Meaning.

IF it be said, that we ought not in *any Case* to *censure* others, so as to deny unto them the Pledge of Christian Communion, for any *wrong Sense* which

which we apprehend they put upon Scripture, as long as they own the formal Words of Revelation; (which is the very Point in which our present *Differences* about *Scripture-Consequences*, and *Declarations of Faith*, do center) I would then ask our *Non-Subscribers*, in *what Sense* are the Scriptures the *Rule of Faith*? Or, *how* do they teach us what is *necessary* for us to *believe* in order to our Salvation? If it be said, That it is sufficient if we take them in *such* a Sense, *whatever it be*, as will influence a Life of true *Evangelical Holiness*; I grant it. But then still it is *queried* whether an *Evangelical Faith*, be *necessary* to *such* Holiness of Life? If not, what serves the Gospel for? If it be, then the Question is, whether in order to beget this *Evangelical Faith* in the Heart, it be not *necessary*, in many Instances to receive the Scriptures in *one certain determinate* Meaning? If it be said it is not, then it is plain the Scriptures are no *Rule of Faith* at all; nor is it possible to urge the Authority of Scripture, in *determining* any one Article of Belief, since without Prejudice to a Life of *Holiness*, they may be understood in *contradictory* Meanings. And then to what Purpose do they serve? If it be moreover said, That in Matters of the greatest Moment, and most universal Concern, Persons well dispos'd, cannot fail to understand them in the *true* and *genuine* Sense. Yet still, it remains to be determin'd, what those *Things of Moment* are? Who are well disposed, or free from Prejudice? And what *that genuine Meaning* is? If this *last* cannot be *defin'd*, we are where we were before, and the Scriptures are but

a *Nose of Wax*, as some have impiously called them; or a *leaden Rule*, that may be turn'd which way soever the vitiated *Judgments* of Men may be dispos'd. But if the *genuine Sense* of Scripture can be *defin'd*, and the Things of Moment *specify'd*, it follows that we may *censure* those as *unsound* in the Faith, and *ill dispos'd*, who, in these momentous Points, refuse to receive the Scriptures in a *determinate Sense*.

AND if we may *censure* Men, so as to question the Credibility of their Profession, and deny them the Pledge of Communion (and the Argument is at least as strong in the Case of *recommending* Persons to the *Ministry*) who deny what we apprehend to be the *only genuine Sense* of Scripture, in a *necessary Point* of Faith, or who maintain a *contradictory* Meaning; they must fall under the *same Censure* who refuse in such Points, to be *determin'd* by *Consequences* of so immediate and inseparable a Connexion with such Scripture-Principles, that whoever denies Assent to them, cannot in Reason be suppos'd to believe the Scripture-Principles themselves, in the same Sense in which we do, that is, *relative to us*, in their only *true and genuine* Sense. And that there are *Consequences* of such an Evidence, I have already prov'd in Relation to the *Doctrine* of the TRINITY; which of all others is of the greatest Importance in Religion. Either therefore we must not censure those who deny that JESUS CHRIST is the *great God*, the supreme Object of *Worship*; otherwise we may *censure* those who deny that he is *one God with the Father*,

Father, one in Nature and Essence, equal in Power and Glory. And the like is to be understood of the Holy Ghost. It would be *Stupidity* to imagine otherwise.

I grant that in some Instances a Man may believe a Proposition, and take it in its immediate Sense, who may refuse to assent to a remote, tho' just, Consequence from it. He may *not be able* to argue closely, nor to discern the *Connexion* and *Dependence* of Things, to which he must be led by a Succession of Arguments. And it would be hard to censure a Man for an *involuntary* Weakness or Incapacity; it would be also hard, in all Cases, to charge a Man with holding the Consequences of his own Opinions. But to grant this in every Instance of Importance, is not to allow for the *Infirmities* of human Understanding, but to strip Men of all Understanding, and to thrust them down into the Rank of *Idiots* or Men distracted.

THE Thing is plain. Either no Man ought to be *censur'd* for any *Error in Doctrine*, for any *wrong Sense* he may put upon Scripture, or for denying *what*, upon the strongest Grounds, we are bound to believe is the *Scripture-Doctrine*, in any one Article of Belief, whilst he professes that the *Bible is his Religion*; otherwise we must not be debar'd *censuring* those as *unsound*, and Corrupters of Faith, who, in *some Instances*, refuse to be determin'd by *evident Conclusions* from *Scripture-Principles*.

It is still urged, That one Man is liable to mistake the *Sense* of Scripture as another; and, therefore, that whilst Men own the *Words*, they ought not to be *cenfur'd* as unsound in the Faith, for refusing what we take to be the *Sense*. I answer, This is not consequent. For tho' we are liable to *Errors* and *Mistakes*, we are also capable of *Truth* and *Certainty* in some Matters of Faith. And what upon the strongest Grounds we are bound to believe is the *genuine Sense* of Scripture, that *very Sense* we are oblig'd to regard as *Scripture*; so that he who denies it, denies relative to us, the *Scripture* itself, since as the *Committee of Non-Subscribers* rightly observe, the *Sense* of *Scripture*, and not the *sound of Words*, is *Scripture*; of which *Sense* every *Church*, every *Minister*, and *Christian* must judge for themselves, and be guided by such *Judgments* in determining with whom it is fit for them to hold *Communion*.

AND tho' they are not absolutely exempt from Error, in their *Judgments* and *Censures*; yet where Men have no other *Ends*, in the *Censures* they pass upon others, than to preserve the Purity of *Faith*, and *Worship* in Christian Churches, without affecting the *Civil Rights* and *Interests* of Men, or encroaching upon that *Liberty of Conscience*, which they are as willing others should enjoy, as themselves; the *Inconveniences* that may sometimes attend an *unjust Sentence*, suppos'd to be *just*, are nothing in Comparison with the voluminous *Mischiefs*, that unavoidably attend a promiscuous

miscuous *Communion* with *all* who profess a regard to the *Scriptures*, *whatever Errors* they hold inconsistent with the *Faith*. Since, in the Nature of Things the bare owning the *Letter* of Scripture, is no rational Evidence, that the sacred Text is not *understood* in a Sense destructive of that *Trust* and *Dependence*, that *Worship*, and those other *practical Regards*, which we owe unto our God and Saviour Jesus Christ : And since the Experience of all Ages, is, alas ! a permanent Proof, that the Plea of owning the *express Words* of Scripture only, has been, and is, made a *Cloke* to the worst of Errors.

ONCE more; If none must be censur'd for Errors in *Doctrine*, whilst they own the *express Words* of Scripture, *whatever Sense* they put upon them, and however they regard the *Consequences* they yeild, then the *Non-Subscribers* might have spar'd the *Preliminary Clauses* to their *Advices*. Then the Apostle, might have spar'd his Exhortations, address'd to whole Churches, to *fallible Men*, who were liable to *Mistakes* in their *Judgments* and *Censures*, That they would mark those that caus'd *Divisions* and *Offences*, *contrary to the SOUND DOCTRINE*, and avoid them. And that they would *withdraw* from those arrogant and haughty Spirits, who fomented Error in the Church, *whose Words* would eat as a *Canker*. Then the Apostolical Precept, *A Man that is an Heretick, after the first and second Admonition reject*, should be expung'd out of the Canon. Then our Saviour himself was too severe in his *Censures* against the *Jewish Doctors* ;

for tho' they rendred the *Word* of God of none Effect, with their corrupt *Glosses* and *Comments* on the *Law*, yet they religiously adher'd to the *Words* of Revelation; and would rather part with the *Sense* of a hundred Texts, than with one *Letter*, or *Point* in a single *Word*, tho' supernumerary. And the great *St. Paul*, instead of charging *Timothy* and others, not to *strive about Words*, should have inverted his Orders, and willed them to contend earnestly about *Words*, but leave their *Meaning*, and *Consequences* to the Wind.

THUS, Sir, I have endeavour'd to make good my Argument, in relation to a *credible Profession* of *Christianity*, and the *Stress* which ought to be laid on *Scripture-Consequences*, in regulating the *Terms* of Communion. If in this, or any other part of the Argument *between* us, I have advanc'd any *Positions* inconsistent with the *Fulness* and *Perfection* of the *Holy Scriptures*, the great *End* of Revelation, or the *Truth* which is according to *Godliness*, I shall think it a Triumph, upon Conviction, to acknowledge my Mistake.





THE CONCLUSION.

Shewing, briefly, what the New Scheme concerning the TRINITY is. Who they are that may be said to propagate it. That the SUBSCRIBERS have not insinuated more frightful Things about it, than it became them to do. This Scheme compared with the CATHOLICK SENSE, and the Difference between them fairly stated. Occasion'd by what, we are told by a Committee of the NON-SUBSCRIBING Ministers, may very justly, be expected from the SUBSCRIBERS.

IT is upon the foregoing Principles, as far as I can apprehend, that the *Subscribing Ministers* have acted in their late Opposition to the *New Scheme*, which they conceive is inconsistent with the *Scripture Doctrine* of the *TRINITY*, or the *Faith* once delivered to the *Saints*. And because the unhappy Differences that have risen among

us here in London, and which perhaps gave the Rise to this Controversy, in which you, Sir, have thought fit to involve *yourself* and me, can hardly be thought on, but our Minds are, at the same Time, led to some Reflections on *that Scheme*; I shall, before I take my Leave of you, attempt to satisfy you, and the rest of the Brethren of your Committee, in a Point relating to it, which it would seem, the Subscribers have been somewhat negligent in. This I am the rather inclin'd to do, because it may help some Persons, in comparing the new Scheme, with the Catholick Sense, to judge whether the Difference between them, be not of very great Importance in Religion.

In the first Part of the Reply * of your Committee, Pag. 26: We are told, 'It were to be wish'd that our Brethren [the Subscribers] would shew us, the [Non-Subscribers,] what that Scheme is which they are so continually referring to, and insinuating so many frightful Things about; and then fairly prove who they are that endeavour to propagate this Scheme. This we think may very justly be expected from Persons who boast so much of their Openness and Sincerity'. That the Subscribers boast of their Openness and Sincerity, any otherwise than to rejoice in it, that God enabled them to be Faithful and Honest, in confessing their Faith before many Wit-

* Reply to the Subscribing-Ministers REASONS, in their VINDICATION, for declaring their Faith at this critical juncture. and in other than express Scripture Words. Published by Agreement of a Committee, of the Non-Subscribing Ministers.

nesses, in Words of Truth and Soberness, without Collusion, without Ambiguity; is more than the Non-Subscribers can know. And this Rejoicing no Man can take from them. But if what is here propos'd, may be justly expected from them, I hope it will not be took ill, if one, who looks upon the part he has acted in Concurrence with the Subscribing Ministers, as the most glorious part of his Life, endeavours to answer such Expectation.

BUT first, How comes it to pass that the Gentlemen of the Committee should be such Strangers to what we call the New Scheme? How easy would it be for us to spare ourselves the Trouble of informing them, and to refer them for Satisfaction, to many of those Pamphlets that have been lately written in Defence of their own Conduct, and against the Principles and Conduct of the Subscribers; from the Synod, and Letter to Dr. Gale, to Mr. Emlyn's late Book, and the Nature and Consequences of Enthusiasm considered, &c? I had almost forgot to observe here, it is not improbable, but the Subscribers might think, that their Brethren on the other side, had heard of Dr. Clark's Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity; (a Scheme which some have endeavour'd to skreen from Censure and Observation, by a Management, not of all others, the most open and sincere,) and might from thence conclude, that they really understood what was meant by the New Scheme, if the Words were but barely repeated, without any Comment: Or, must we be more explicite in shewing what we intend by the New Scheme, than some are willing to be in
shewing

showing their Sense of Scripture? Be it so. Yet still we may plead, that some of us have shewed what that Scheme is. I have done something towards it myself, both in the Body of my *Advice to Christians*, to commend for the Faith once delivered to Saints, and in the *Marginal References*; besides what has been done by much better Hands. And if I may but gratify the Committee, I shall think it Labour well bestow'd to give a *Sketch* of it again; that every one may see, whether the *New Scheme* about which the SUBSCRIBERS insinuate so many frightful Things, ought not to be as shocking to all true Believers of the Gospel, as it appears to be to them.

THE Scheme then which we refer to, and which Dr. Clark and others, have drawn out in full length is, the Notion of one Supreme, and two Dependent, Secondary GODS: Gods who exist not by absolute Necessity of Nature, but by the Will and Power of another, to whom they owe that they are, and what they are. It is their Scheme, who at the same Time, that in Words, they own Jesus Christ to be truly and properly LORD, and God, yet deny him to be God most high, or absolutely Supreme; and make his true and proper God-head an Inferior delegated Divinity, which he receiv'd, as well as his Being, from the Will of him on whom he depends. It is their Scheme, who refuse to honour the Son, in Conjunction with the Father, as the highest Object of Divine Worship: Who make the Divine Person called the Son, inferior to the Father in his Divine Nature and Attributes;

and

and the *Holy Ghost* inferior to both ; and in Consequence of this, deny them to be *one God with the Father*. In a Word, it is their *Scheme*, who, in Defiance of the whole Tenor of Scripture Revelations, pretend to worship CHRIST with *distinct* and *proper* Adoration, and yet refuse to acknowledge him God, in the *highest*, *strict*, and most *proper Sense*. We know there are other Errors of a very unfriendly Aspect to the Doctrine of the Trinity : But this is the *Scheme* that has made the greatest Noise in the World of late, and which, the *Subscribers* are of Opinion, is repugnant to the first Principles of *natural*, as well as of *revealed Religion*. And it seems to be the *Tessera* by which to *distinguish* those in our Days, who deny the Truth of that Consequence, That *these three are one God*, &c. which appears *just* to you, tho' you are not so well satisfy'd about it as you are concerning the *Premises*, whence it *manifestly* and *necessarily* flows.

It is not very material by what *Name* this *Scheme* is called, so it be not called *Christianity*. But I think we may, without any Injustice done to *Men*, or *Words*, rank the Assertors of it among the Followers of *Arius*, tho' they may not chuse in every Thing to use his Terms.

PERMIT me now, Sir, to give my Thoughts, who they are that may be said to *propagate* this *Heretical Scheme*. There are two Ways of doing the *same* Thing ; the one *avowedly* and without *Disguise*, which is the most honourable : The other more tacitely by *Connivence*, *seeming* *Appro-*
bation,

tion, and Encouragement. *Malum qui non prohibet, cum potest, Jubeat*; saith the Moralist. If this will hold, then not only they who *openly declare* for the *New Scheme*, may be said to *propagate* it; but they also, who, when *providentially* called to it, *refuse to declare against it*; or who, when they *would seem* so to do, do it in *Terms ambiguous or equivocal*, and which the greatest *Patrons* of this *Error* are *known* to make use of. Especially, they may be said to *propagate* this *Notion*, who *contrive* *Plans* to preserve from *Censure*, to continue in, or admit into the *Ministerial Office*, as *Persons* duly qualify'd to have the *Qver-sight* of *Christian Churches*, those who are *known*, or upon good *Grounds suspected*, to have gone into it, without insisting upon a *credible Proof*, that they have *relinquish'd it, and return'd to the Truth*; or that they were *wrongfully suspected* to imbrace an *Error* which they never held. In a *Word*, they may in a *Sense* be said to *propagate* this *Scheme*, who are so far from *insinuating* any *frightful Things* about it, that they plainly *insinuate the contrary*, and endeavour to suppress that *Indignation* which all good *Christians* ought to have against a *Scheme* so dishonourable to their *LORD*; which strips him of his *eternal Godhead*, and ranks him with *inferior dependent Beings*, the *Works* of his *Hands*. And I will venture to say, That the *new vampt Arianism* has not gain'd so much *Ground*, by all the *Books* written in *open Defence* of it, as by the *Influence* of those *Latitudinarian, or Laodicean* * *Principles*

* Rev. 3. 16. ἔσθωκε, ὅτι χλιαρὸς εἶ, καὶ ἔτι ψυχρὸς οὐκ εἶ, μᾶλλον οὐκ εἶ, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ ἐσθωκεν μεν.

which

which too many among us have greedily swallow'd down without Fear or Caution.

YOU know, Sir, on what side they are, who by their Conduct and Writings are perpetually suggesting, That the *late Differences* about the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, are of no great Importance in Religion; (tho' they immediately strike at the *Object*, and *Nature* of our Worship; and the *Nature* and *formal Reason* of that Faith or Trust in, and Obedience to, the Lord Jesus Christ, on which our Interest in all the Blessings of the new Covenant depends:) That Men may be very good Christians, and challenge all the Privileges and Offices that relate to Christian Communion with us, tho' they do not believe, for Instance, that Jesus Christ, the *Word* or *Logos*, is *one* in *Nature* with the Father, the *true, eternal*, and *supreme* God: And tho' they refuse to Worship him as the *great* and *true* God *over all*, *Blessed for evermore*. I have taken some Notice of these new Notions of *Indifferency*, in another Place; * and I am still of Opinion, that as they are detestable in themselves, and argue a sneaking, indolent Meanness of Spirit; so they are as dangerous to the Faith, as the most undisguis'd Opposition; and of a more malignant Influence upon others, who may not be aware of the Poyson that lurks under them.

HAVING thus far answered the *Wish* of the *Committee*; I may be allowed to add, That the

* *Advice to Christians*, &c. Pag. 50. to 58.

Subscribing Ministers have not insinuated more frightful Things about this Scheme, than became them to do. They have freely declared against it as a dangerous Error, contrary to the *Holy Scriptures*, and the common Faith of the *Reformed Churches*. And if they have insinuated that it is an Error of such a pernicious Nature and Tendency, that they can have no Freedom to *Ordain* those to the *Ministry* who maintain it; this is no more, than upon their Principles, they were oblig'd to do; since they look upon the opposite *Truth*, to be the very *Basis* and *Foundation* of Christianity itself. Nor can any *publick Trust* they may be invested with, for the *Benefit of others*, oblige them to act contrary to their Judgment, and violate their Consciences, in admitting those into the *Ministry* (or even to Communion) who deny what they believe a *Fundamental Truth*; or, upon Suspicion given that they hold the contrary ERROR, refuse to give a reasonable Satisfaction. For this would be to oblige them to do, what they could not but esteem a *Breach* of their *Trust*, a *Prostitution* of Things Sacred, and a *traiterous* giving up of Truth.

If the *Subscribers* lay too great a *Stress* on the commonly receiv'd Doctrine, the *Non-Subscribers* who profess to believe the same Doctrine, tho' they put not such a *Value* upon it, would do well to shew them their Mistake: And by *open Dealing* and *solid Reasoning*, which has not yet appear'd, convince them, that it does not enter into the *Life* or *Essence* of the Christian Religion, what Men believe concerning the Person of Christ; that is, *whether* they believe him to be one God with

with the Father, or an *inferior God*, diverse from him ; whether they honour him even as they honour the Father, with the same divine Worship, the same Resignation of their Understandings, Wills, and Affections to his supreme Authority, and the same Trust and Confidence in his Power and Mercy, and that because they believe him to be one God with the Father ; or, whether they worship him but with an *inferior Degree* of Worship as a *made, dependent God*, or a God by Office and Deputation only. Let our Brethren shew us that it is not of very great Importance in Religion, in which of these *Ways* we regard our Blessed Redeemer, (and the like concerning the *Holy Ghost*) and we shall retract any undue Estimate we may have put on the *Catholick Doctrine*, mean Time we do firmly believe that the *Catholick Doctrine* is the *Scripture Doctrine* ; and are afraid that the *New Scheme* involves in it, that extreme Error of Mind, which the Apostle calls, *denying the Lord* † [*ἀρνούμενον*] *that bought us*. And can we, under these Apprehensions, be too cautious how we enter into *Measures* that look like giving Encouragement to a Doctrine so full of Horror ? *Measures*, which in the common Construction of Things, might prevent the Recovery of the Lapsed, supplant the Weak, and tempt others to sit loose from that sure Foundation, on which they had built all their Hopes !

† Vid. *Advice to Christians*, &c. *Marg. Pag.* 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

THE Case between us and the modern *Arians*, whom I have sometimes call'd new *Methodists*, is plainly this. The Followers of Mr. *Whiston*, and Dr. *Clark*, regard Jesus Christ as an inferior God, of a Nature *diverse* from, and *produc'd*, before all Ages, by the *Will* and *Power* of God the *Father*; who, to the *Exclusion* of the *Son* and *Spirit*, is *alone* the *supreme God*, the *Original*, and *Lord* of all. They deny the *necessary Existence* of the *Word* or *Logos*, because *that* would infer his *Independency*; and make him as truly the *voluntary Production* † of the *first Cause* as any *Creature* is.

In

† Here they are not so consistent with themselves, or not so *Honest* as the old *ARIANS*. For when they deny the *Son*, or second Person, to exist by *Necessity* of Nature, or to be the *Self-existent Substance*, and affirm him to derive his *Being* or *Essence*, and all his *Attributes* from the *Will* of the *Father*, as from the *supreme Cause*: they pretend to censure those who say he was made (*ἐκ οὐκ ὄντος*) out of *Nothing*: Whereas they themselves say the same Thing. For it is as demonstrable as the *Existence* of God, or of any Thing; That if the *Word* or *Logos*, exists not by *Necessity* of Nature, nor is the *self-existent Substance*, but was *produc'd* by, or is *deriv'd* from, the *Will* and *Power* of the *Father*, as by, or from, the *supreme Cause*, he must be originally made *out of Nothing*. They also pretend to censure those who say, *that there was a time when the Son was not*, [*ἦν ἡν ἦν ὁ υἱος ἡν ἦ*] when they themselves deny him to be *eternal* in the highest Sense, as the *Father* is *eternal*; or to be absolutely *eternal*, as that imports *Necessity of Being*.

I cannot here, but take Notice of something very like a *Prevarication* in Mr. *Peirce's* Defence of the Case of the Ministers ejected at *Exon*, &c. *Pag.* 29. where he tells us, *That Dr. Clark does not venture to say, that Christ is a VOLUNTARY PRODUCTION*. Perhaps the *Doctor* does not use those individual Terms; but that he uses Words apparently of the same Meaning, Mr. *Pierce* must know, if he has read his *Scripture Doctrine*, Part

In Consequence of this, they allow him but an inferior Degree of religious Worship. The like they say respectively of the *Holy Ghost*, whom they make subordinate in Nature and Attributes to the Father and Son.

ON the contrary; they who adhere to the *Catholic* Faith, confess and worship our Blessed LORD, as *one God* with the Father, absolutely supreme over all. And tho' they may have different *Theories* concerning the *Generation* of the Son, yet they agree in this, that the Word *God* is applied, to him in Scripture, in the *same Eminence*, as it
is

2. §. 17. Part 3. Pag. 429, to 432. Reply to Mr. Nelson, Pag. 113: Answer to the Author of some Considerations, Pag. 226, 227. Part of a *Letter* publish'd in an Apology for Dr. Clark. And the Doctor's own Explanation of the *Paper* he presented to the *Bishops*, July 2. 1714. Does he not venture to say, that Christ is a *voluntary Production*, who says expressly, That he was begotten, not by absolute *Necessity of Nature* (which, he grants, would infer *Self-existence, and Independency*) but by the *Will* and *Power* of the Father, as the supreme *Cause*? Does he not make him a *voluntary Production* who will not allow him to be so much as a *necessary Emanation* from the *Self-existent Being*, or *Substance*, but to owe his *original* intirely to the *Will* of the Father, in *Opposition* to any *necessary Derivation*, which the Doctor treats as a *Contradiction*? Does he not make Christ a *voluntary Production*, who makes the Father alone the *Self-existent Substance*, and rejects the *Notion* of the *Communication* of the Father's *Essence* or *Substance* to the Son, with *Contempt*? And who, in one Word, will not allow the Son to be, in any Respect, *Self-existent*, or *necessarily existent*? How then could this Gentleman venture to impose at this rate upon his Readers? What equivocal use of Words can justify an Assertion so manifestly false in Sense? Or, is it by such Arts this new Convert intends to recommend Dr. Clark's Notions to the World? Or, is there a *Fatality* in it, that those who go into the New Scheme, must from that Time, speak either *inconsistently*, or *disingenuously*?

is to the Father : That whatever the *Manner* of his Generation be, it is consistent with his being together with the Father, the *eternal necessary Being*, as he partakes equally with him of *that Nature*, to which it belongs to *exist necessarily*, and *independently* ; without which he could be no otherwise God, than in a figurative Sense. The like they believe of the *Holy Ghost*. That those Attributes and Operations are ascribed to him, which distinguish the true and only God, from all *subordinate Beings* whatsoever. In Consequence of which it is the *Matter of their Faith*, that *these three are one God*, as much as it is, that the *Characters of Godhead* are ascribed to *each* of them *distinctly*, when at the same time it is declared, that there is but *one only GOD* *.

I

* If we find something in this very different from our common Notions of Things, and Persons; something that we cannot comprehend; it ought not greatly to surprize us; nor should we at all be stumbled at it; considering that we are not able to solve all the Difficulties, that occur to our Thoughts in Things of an inferior Nature. Here is no real Contradiction to Reason. If three Men agree in the same specifical Nature, if it is no Contradiction to suppose that one intelligent Spirit, should, in three distinct Bodies, perform all rational and vital Operations, so as to denominate each of the three, so animated, a Person, in which Case the three would subsist in, or by one numerical intelligent Nature; the Possibility of which cannot be denied, unless we will confine the Power and Influence of a created Spirit to an indivisible Point. If in our own Souls we plainly perceive distinct Powers, and Faculties, and Operations; which is plain enough from the Contrariety which sometimes we feel between them. In a Word, if it is not a Contradiction to say, that in an incomprehensible Nature, there is something that is incomprehensible; which is so far from being a Contradiction, that it were not otherwise incomprehensible; then it is no Contradiction to say, That it is essential to the eternal Godhead, that in the Unity of the divine Nature, there should

I would now ask any unprejudic'd Person, whether these two Schemes differ in Matters of mere

should be three Persons, or Subsistencies, of one Substance, Power, and Eternity, who in Scripture, are distinguish'd by the Names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

It must be confessed, that no Comparison drawn from Things finite, and temporary, can illustrate this tremendous Mystery, of *three Persons in the Unity of the Godhead*. But it hath been often made appear, that all other Schemes which have been propos'd, are attended with much greater Difficulties, *Dr. Clark's in particular, is loaded with Contradictions*; besides its contrariety to the infallible Word of God. And this only will bear the *Test of Scripture*. This therefore is what we are bound to believe, as we would not renounce our Allegiance to him who is the Fountain of intellectual Light. What is incomprehensible in it, we are not required to comprehend. But, upon the Testimony of God, we are obliged to believe that to be true, the Manner whereof is, to human Understandings, incomprehensible. 'Propose to me, says the famous Chillingworth, any Thing out of this Book [the BIBLE] and require whether I believe or no, and seem it never so incomprehensible to human Reason, I will SUBSCRIBE it with HAND and Heart, as knowing no Demonstration can be stronger than this, God hath said so, therefore it is true'. Pag. 290. This follows that Passage already mention'd, in which this great Man acknowledges, that what may be prov'd by a plain CONSEQUENCE from Scripture, is Matter of Faith, as distinguish'd from what is only a Matter of Opinion. So that Mr. Chillingworth was for subscribing with this Hand, any Doctrine that could be prov'd by an indubitable CONSEQUENCE from Scripture, how unaccountable soever it might be to human Reason. It is however evident from Scripture and Reason, That there is but one God. Nor is the Acknowledgment of a Deity more necessary to Religion, than it is to have no other Gods, to worship none other, but the one God, so that if Jesus Christ be not, together with the Father, the one God, it is a Breach of the First Commandment, a Violation of the eternal Law of Reason, to worship him with divine Adoration. Nor could this Law, so often repeated, and spirited with so many Sanctions, relating to both Worlds, be dispens'd with, by any subsequent Constitution, but that the Veracity of God, and the original Grounds of the Law itself, must be brought into Question. Which would be, in Effect, to destroy God's Government over Man; and to render Religion a mere Arbitrary, that is, an uncertain precarious Thing, and to divest it of Morality.

mere Speculation only? Whether they do not differ widely, in Things of *vast Consequence*, and general Concern in Christianity? And whether those who are so opposite in their Sentiments concerning this Doctrine can be *unanimous* in the same Acts of Worship? For my own Part, I cannot see upon what *religious Principles* either Side can desire personal Communion with the other, in all the Offices of Religion: or, how they can coalesce without extreme Confusion. He who abhors the Notion of a *made* or a *dependent* GOD, must detest that Worship as *Immoral* and *Idolatrous* which is address'd to an *Inferior Deity*. And he who avowedly *reveres* the Son as *God absolutely supreme over all*, must be guilty of *Sacrilege*, in the Judgment of him who reserves that *Honour* to the Person of the Father only: As he who robs the Son of that Glory, and ascribes to him but an *official Divinity*, denies Jesus Christ his Due, in the Apprehension of that Man, who believes him to be *the true God*. And is it not much more decent for Persons who appear not to have the *same Faith* and who must, if they are consistent with themselves, mutually charge one another with *Immorality* in Worship, to agree to *separate*, than to endeavour after a *Co-alition*, that never can be *safe* or *honourable* to either Side; which, instead of edifying, must perplex the Minds of the Worshipers; and which seems inconsistent with any true Zeal for God, or sincere Regard to Religion. Can the *Subscribers* be blam'd if they are scrupulous on this Head, and even afraid of the *Terrors of the LORD*?

WE are not for making it necessary to Communion that others should account for, or illustrate the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, in the *same Manner* with ourselves. We allow there may be different Speculations concerning it, consistent with Agreement in the Main of the Article itself, as it ascertains the *Object* of our religious Worship and Dependence, the End of our Obedience, and the *Grounds* of our Hope. But any Explication that destroys the *Morality* of the first *Commandment*, which is the Foundation of all true Religion; or, that robs the *Son* and *Spirit* of the Majesty and Glory of the eternal Godhead, as *one* in *Nature* or *Essence*, and all divine *Perfections*, with the Father; this we look upon to be inconsistent with the *Scripture-Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, as it is a necessary Part of Faith. And they who profess to believe the *same Thing* with us, in relation to the *Truth* and *Importance* of this great and fundamental Article of our Religion; and yet shew their Readiness to receive into the *Ministry*, Persons who maintain a *contradictory Scheme*, cannot be vindicated from betraying the Truth, and encouraging a dangerous Error. This may be thought a severe Censure, but I have, at present, too deep a Sense of it, to retract it; which, however, I shall willingly do, when I am shewed my Mistake. If it be said that a Man may believe this Truth, or not deny it, who yet shall refuse to give *his Sense* of it, in any but *Scripture Words*; I answer, all that is required is a *Testimony* that he does believe this *controverted Truth*. And this he

can never give by *barely repeating*, or professing to own those Words of Scripture, which the *avowed Enemies* of this Doctrine are as ready to *repeat and own* as he. And he who shall refuse an explicate Testimony of his adhering to any *controverted Truth*, acknowledg'd to be of very great Moment, when *providentially* call'd to it, may be said to *betray* that Truth. And if he is *suspected* of holding, or favouring the contrary Error, he has himself to thank for it.

I fear, *Sir*, I have given you too much Trouble on this Head. I was willing to put Matters in as true a Light as I could. And then leave every sincere Reader of his BIBLE to judge, whether the Difference between the *New Scheme*, and the *Catholick Faith*, be not of such Importance, as will justify all the *frightful Things*, the *Subscribing Ministers* have insinuated about it. Or whether they could be *faithful* to their *Trust*, or act according to *Principle*, if they had not testify'd an *open Dislike*, of what they apprehend to be a very pernicious Error. This, I think, they were oblig'd to do, without regarding the empty Cavil of those, who refuse to be determin'd by *Scripture-Consequences* in Matters of Faith; and ask the *Letter* of Scripture, for every Thing they are required to believe. A Principle which has neither *Reason*, nor *Scripture*, to support it; which is an open Affront to Reason, and if universally follow'd, would be of very fatal Consequences in Religion. It brings an universal Blot upon all the *Confessions* of the REFORMED CHURCHES. It has been the

Cover

Cover of the worst *Heresies* since the first Rise of the *Arian* Controversy. And is not only condemn'd by all the *Orthodox*, but is manifestly repugnant to the Judgment, and Practice of our Saviour and his Apostles ; who, when they applied themselves to the Understandings of *fallible* Men, appeal'd, not to their own *Infallibility*, but to the *Authority* of Scripture, for those Things which agreed with the *Sense* and *Scope* of Scripture, or by *lawful Consequences* arose out of the Passages refer'd to. And unless we will still allow of the same Method in determining Articles of Belief, the *Analogy of Faith*, and THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS, are Words that have no Signification.

I A M,

with much Respect,

REVEREND SIR,

Your very Affectionate

Brother, and Servant

LONDON,
February 2.
1720.

JOHN CUMMING.

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POSTSCRIPT

Relating to the

Sonship of Christ.

— SHEWING —

*The UNCERTAINTY of the main-
Principle on which the ARIANS found
their Faith in a DEPENDENT
GOD. With a particular Reference to
Dr. CLARK'S Scheme.*



YOU are pleas'd, Sir, in the Close of
your Letter, to refer to something I
had suggested, * it seems, 'out of the
' common way of the Orthodox about the
' Generation of Christ, or the Sense where-
' in he is called in Scripture, the SON of GOD'. I am
glad that you do not condemn that Notion as

* Advice to Christians, &c. Marg. Pag. 16, 17, 18,

Heretical ;

Heretical; which gives me some Hope, that you may in Time be of my Mind. But before I explain myself farther on that Head, I shall remind you of the *Observation* you make upon it, which is to me scarce intelligible. Your Words are, 'I only take Notice of this, in order to add this Observation upon it, that whoever enter into this Notion of the Generation of Christ, (as, if I am not misinform'd, some others of our subscribing Brethren have done,) they will recede from the Doctrine establish'd in the ancient Creeds, and in the several Confessions of the Reform'd Churches, full as widely, and in a Matter wherein these Creeds and Confessions are altogether as positive and particular, as in the absolute Unity of the divine Nature and Essence'. —

HERE my Difficulty is, to find out what the Words *full as widely*, refer unto. I have turn'd the Passage all the Ways I can think of, but cannot perceive in the whole Period, any other Word, to which they may, with any tolerable Propriety, be join'd. For surely, you do not mean, that whoever imbraces this Notion, must differ from the Reformed Churches, about the Unity of the divine Essence; for neither will your Words bear that Construction, without supplying an *Ellipsis*; nor is it true in Fact, nor at all consequent from the Notion itself; which you own is consistent with a Man's being Sound and Orthodox in the Main of the Doctrine. But if your Meaning be, that whoever enter into this Notion will recede from the ancient Creeds, and Confessions of the Reformed, in a Matter in which they are as positive, as they are, in asserting the Unity of the divine Nature, and

and Essence; this may be partly true, tho' improperly express'd. However, if this be your Sense, let me beg of you to except some *ancient Creeds*, particularly *that called the Apostles*. And let me farther desire, that you would distinguish between the *Article itself*, as it immediately affects the *Personality*, and *Divinity* of the *Son and Spirit*, or their being God in the *same Sense* in which the *Father* is God; as partaking of the *same Nature and Perfections* with him; and the *Ways* of *illustrating* or *explaining* the *Modus* or *Manner* of this awful *Mystery*: And then, I doubt not, it can be easily shewn, all the *Reform'd Churches* are agreed, it is not necessary to preserve the Purity of Faith and Worship, that there should be an *exact* Agreement in the *last*, provided the *first* be secur'd and acknowledged.

As to the Point itself. You are so good as to own, I affirm'd nothing out of the Orthodox way. Nor do I love to be *Dogmatical* in a Thing of this abstruse Nature. What I propos'd was only in *Hypothesis*; and I hope, with that Reverence, Modesty, and Self-Diffidence with which it becomes us to conceive, and speak of the divine Nature. However, I find by *Letters*, and *Conversation*, that very different, and some not very friendly, *Remarks* have been made upon it. I shall therefore take the Opportunity you have offered me, to express myself more fully on this Matter; which will, perhaps, prevent any farther Misrepresentations of my Meaning, and at the same

same Time shew, what it was that led me to any such Thoughts.

I found that Dr. Clark, and his Followers, laid a mighty Stress on the Argument of the GENERATION of the Son, as applied to his Divine pre-existent Nature. And I had some Reason to suspect that this was what most gravell'd our young Students and Candidates for the Ministry; who could not reconcile their Idea of Generation with a proper Equality between the divine Persons; or, with the Son's being possess'd of all Divine Perfections, as absolute Eternity, Necessity or Independency of Being, the most perfect Life, infinite Greatness and Goodness, &c. which are inseparable from the very Notion of God.

Now, whoever turns his Thoughts this way, cannot possibly not see, That if the Son was generated by the Will and Power of the Father, in Contradistinction to such a Generation as is by absolute Necessity of Nature (as Dr. Clark asserts;) he must be in all Respects inferior to the Father, and Dependent on his Will; and be a very Creature, as much as any created Angel or Spirit. For I may venture to say, that neither Dr. Clark, nor any Man living can assign a real Difference between such an Arbitrary Generation, and a proper Creation; since Generation is, confessedly, a figurative Expression, when us'd in *puris Divinis*.

It is not to the Purpose to say, that Generation, supposing it to be the Effect of the Father's Will, is a more excellent Way of Production, than Crea-

tion

tion. The Angels, those Sons of God, may, for ought we know, have been made, created, or produc'd in a more excellent Way, than unintelligent Matter. And the Scripture speaking of the *first Man*, who was immediately of God, † plainly intimates that his *intelligent Spirit* was the *Offspring* of God, or deriv'd its Being from him in a more excellent Way than his Body. This last, it is said, was form'd of the *Dust of the Ground*; but the LORD God breath'd into his Face or Nostrils the *Spirit of Life*, and he became a living Soul. Yet this living Spirit was as much God's Creature, as the Dust itself.

Men may perplex a plain Case with Words that have no Meaning; but it is as evident as that two and two make four, That whatever exists, must exist either by *absolute Necessity of Nature*, or by the *Will and Power* of another. And whatever exists by the *Will and Power* of another, in Opposition to *necessary Existence*, is as much a *created Thing*, whatever the Manner of its Production be, and as dependent on the *sovereign Will* of that other, as the meanest Animal.

If it be said that the Son may have his Existence by *absolute Necessity of Nature*, and yet derive his Being, and Attributes from the *Will and Power* of the Father, as from the *Supreme Cause*. I answer, that if these Words, *Derive, Will, Cause*, are understood properly, or in a philosophical Sense, it is a Contradiction in Terms.

† Luke 3. 38.

Let it be but acknowledg'd, That the *Word* or *Logos* exists by *absolute Necessity of Nature*, that he is *eternally* and *necessarily* *WHAT* he is, and it will follow of its own Accord, that he is *self-existent*; or, which is the same, That the *Nature* of the Son does *not depend* as to its *Existence*, on any other *Nature* distinct from itself. But if we ascribe any proper *Causality* to the *Will* of the Father, in the *Generation* of the Son, as *that* is opposed to existing by *absolute Necessity of Nature*, it will follow, whether we will or no, that the Son is as much a *voluntary Production*, or a *created Being*, as any *created Angel* or *Spirit*. They who think otherwise, need never reject any *Doctrine* because it is *Mysterious*, or *incomprehensible*, their *Minds* being form'd to receive palpable *Contradictions*.

I cannot therefore help thinking, that Dr. Clark acts rather the Part of a *Sophister* playing with Words, than of a learned *Divine*, when to this Objection, 'Every thing that is, must be either God himself, or be MADE by him.' He answers, 'It has generally been thought very orthodox to suppose, that something may be BEGOTTEN of Him'*. Since he must know, that his *Notion* of the Sons being BEGOTTEN, or deriving his Being from the Will and Power of the Father, as from the supreme CAUSE, in opposition to necessary Existence, is the very same with his being MADE, Mr. Whiston speaks with more Candor, or at least more consistently with himself, when he uses the

* Answer to the Author of *Some Considerations*, &c. pag. 227.

TERMS MADE, CREATED OR BEGOTTEN as synonymous; which they must unavoidably be, upon Dr. Clark's Scheme, as well as upon his.

NOW, the Notion of an *inferior, created GOD*, who is the proper Object of ADORATION, is so shocking to Reason, and so repugnant to the whole Tenor and Scope of the sacred Writings, which were principally design'd to lead Men to the Worship of *one only GOD*; That if it undeniably follow'd from the Son's being BEGOTTEN, that therefore He must be *dependent* as to his *Being* and Operations, on the *Will* and *Power* of Father, as the *Effect* on its proper *Cause*, and consequently be the Father's *Creature*; I should, from the *other* Things spoken of *Jesus Christ* in Scripture, conclude, without any Hesitation, that the Term SON was purely *OEconomical*, and did not belong to him with respect to his divine *pre-existent Nature* consider'd *absolutely*.

TO be the *Messiah* and to be the *Son of God*, was esteem'd by the *Jews* one and the same Thing. This they grounded upon the second *Psalms*, where this Epithet is applied to him as the Result of a *Decree* or COVENANT; *I will declare the Decree*, (the LXX. render it the *Ordinance, Law, or Statute of the Lord*; the *Chaldee, the Covenant of God*) *the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee*. St. Paul applies this Oracle to the *Resurrection* of Christ, *Act. 13. 33.* which was the great Proof of his being the *Messias*, or the *Son of God*, *Rom. 1. 4.* And in

the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, he shews that he became our *High Priest*, in pursuance of this Covenant; because God said unto him, *Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee*; Ch. 5. v. 5. which would not be good Reasoning, if the Term *Son* in the second Psalm, refer'd to the Manner of his existing with the Father from all Eternity. It seems rather parallel with Psalm 110. v. 4. *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever, after the Order of Melchizedek*. This was, to speak after the manner of Men, the Ordination of the eternal Word to the Office of Mediator. His own gracious Susception of that Office, (with respect to which the Father is stiled his Father, and his God, and he the Father's Son, and Servant) is express'd elsewhere; *Lo, I come (in the Volume of the Book it is written of me) to do thy Will, O God, Heb. 10. 7.* The Clause invested with the Parenthesis seems to refer to that Decree or Covenant in which *Jehovah* said, *Thou art my Son*. And lest this stupendious Condescension and Grace of our Redeemer should be interpreted to his Dishonour, as if there was any superior Power to command him, or prescribe an Office to him, the Father vindicates his Supremacy, and declares him God, equal with himself; for unto the Son he saith, *Thy Throne, O G O D, is for ever and ever, — And thou, L O R D, (which answers to Jehovah) in the beginning hast laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Works of thine Hands, &c. Heb. 1.* Thus when the the Prophet stiles him *Son*, joining therewith his being a CHILD BORN, and GIVEN UNTO US, which

which seems to be exegetical of the *Sonship*; the Glory of his eternal Godhead is secured in the strongest Terms. A Child born, a Son given, and yet with respect to another Nature, the mighty God! the everlasting Father! *Isaiah* 9. 6. If it be demanded how can this be? I answer, with the learned Bishop *Usher*, 'we must call to Mind 'that the first Letter of this great Name is W O N D E R F U L'; or with the *Apostle*, that great is the Mystery of Godliness, and above the Disquisition of all human, if not all created, Minds. That he who is the MIGHTY GOD was manifested in the Flesh, or assum'd THAT HOLY THING which is called the Son of God, we are bound to believe, and to regard it as the Foundation of all our Hopes; but to fathom this inconceivable Thing is impossible, and ought never to be attempted.

BRIEFLY, there is not any one place in the Old Testament where Son, or Seed, or any Expression denoting Emanation, is us'd of the *Messias*, but what may, without any Violence, be interpreted to refer to his Office as Mediator, or to the OEconomy of Providence. His GOINGS FORTH have been from of old, even from everlasting; *Micah*. 5. 2. This plainly proves his pre-existence; but it is not so plain that the *Exodus* here mention'd, or Goings forth in the plural Number, [the *Septuagint*, as the *LXX* render it] relate to the Manner of his Existence. They may refer to his eternal Counsels in the great Covenant, the Egrefs of his Wisdom and Love concerning the future Salvation of his Church; for verily he was fore-ordain'd before the Foundation of the

the World, but was manifest in these last Times; 1 Pet. 1. 20. Or, they may relate to the Egress of his Power and Wisdom in making and governing the World, For by him were all Things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, &c. And then the three first Verses in John are a good Comment upon the Words of the Prophet. Some interpret them of his frequent Appearances before and under the Law. These indeed might be very properly term'd his *GOINGS FORTH*; he appear'd to Adam, Abraham, Moses; he it was that saved the People out of the Land of Egypt; and afterwards gave the Law; of him the Psalmist sings, O God, when thou WENTEST FORTH before thy People; when then thou didst march thorough the Wilderness; the Earth shook, the Heavens also drop'd at the Presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the Presence of God, the God of Israel. Psal. 68. 7, 8. Only these Goings forth do not so well answer to the Words from of Old, from everlasting. But, as these Phrases are not explicative of one another, but seem to import a plain Gradation; they may very well be understood to refer not only to that eternal Decree or Covenant in which he was set up, as Mediator, from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the Earth was, before his Works of old; * but also to the Time in which he made all Things; and to the Periods in which he acted as the Messenger or Angel of the great Counsel or Covenant.

They may refer to his going forth to save the World, the Day of his Wisdom and Love, and the Day of his Church's Salvation.

* Prov. 8. 22, 23.

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BUT whatever be the Meaning of this Text in *Micah*, it cannot be denied that in the *Jewish* Sense and Phraseology, to be *the Son of God* by way of Eminence, was to be *the Messias*, and to be the *Messias*, was to be the *Son of God*. Thou art *the Son of God*; Thou art *the King of Israel*. Art thou *the Christ*, *the Son of the Blessed*?

It will perhaps be objected; If the *Jews* had no other Notion of the *Sonship* or *Generation* of Christ, than what related to his *Office*, in which the *Humanity* is a necessary Conception; How comes it to pass, that they accus'd him of Blasphemy, for calling himself *the Son of God*? And that when he said that God was *his own Father*, *κύριος ἰσθω*, they infer'd from thence, that he made himself GOD, and EQUAL with GOD?

To this I answer, That the *Jews* might argue from the known *Characters* given to the *Messiah* in the Old Testament, and from the *special Application* made of the Term SON unto Him who was to come. This is at least as probable, as that they drew a *logical* Inference from the *Nature* and *Quality of Generation* considered absolutely. The Controversy between Him and the *Jews* was not whether the *Messias* was a *divine Person* or no, but whether He was the *Messias* or not. And therefore when he assum'd an Epithet which, from the Use of it in the old Testament, was characteristic of the *Messiah*, they censure him as guilty of Blasphemy, because He being, as they falsely imagin'd from the Meanness of his Appearance, a mere Man, and not the *Messias*, assum'd a Title which

which the antient Oracles appropriated to HIM who was God, and equal with God.

THE Thing seems to be plainly this. Christ refers the *Jews* to the Old Testament, as bearing witness of Him. Now, they could not be ignorant, that besides those Declarations which ran in the Nature of *Prophecies*, there were, in the divine Oracles, many *affirmative Propositions* concerning the *Person* and *Character* of the *Messiah*, which were as true of Him then, as since his manifestation; and which plainly declared Him to be GOD, and to be with GOD. He is frequently called GOD and *Jehovah*, and the *God of the Patriarchs*, when he is evidently distinguish'd from *Another*, who is also called *God*, and *Jehovah*. This was a plain Signification of more *Persons* than *One* in the *Godhead*. And yet nothing was more vehemently urg'd upon the People, prone to *Idolatry*, than that there was but *one God*. And the Name *Jehovah* was declared to be sacred and incommunicable to any *other Being*. Whence they must unavoidably infer that there was an *Identity* of Nature between GOD and the *Messiah*. When therefore *Jesus of Nazareth* avouch'd Himself to be the *Son of God*, in such an appropriate Sense as was characteristical of the *Messiah*, He was understood, as declaring Himself to be that *divine Person*, the *Holy One of Israel*, who appear'd to the *Patriarchs*, and to *Moses*; who stil'd Himself the *God of Abraham*, &c. to whom the Scriptures applied the mysterious *Tetragrammaton*, whose Name was to be *Emmanuel*; who was *God's Fellow* or *Equal*; and to whom that Oracle refer-

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red, *The God of the whole Earth shall be called*; that is, not the federal God of the *Jews* only, but also of the *Gentiles*. These and the like divine Appellations, which can belong to none but the great God, being given to the *promis'd Messiah* in the *Old Testament*, and he being also emphatically called *the Son*, as Characteristical of his Messiahship, the *Jews* very naturally infer'd from Christ's assuming the Name of *Son*, in so distinguishing a Sense as to call God *his own Father*, that he made himself God, and *equal with God*; because thereby he declared himself to be the *Messiah*, to whom they knew the highest divine *Titles*, and *Honours* belong'd.

If it be said that the *Jews* had no Notion of the Divinity of the *Messias*. I answer, That this is a begging the Question; That the contrary is much more probable; and that this cannot be affirm'd without supposing them to be stupidly ignorant even of the *Letter* of Scripture; which is a Supposition that will never bear the Weight of an Argument. And if any of the present *Jews* deny the Godhead of that *Messiah* whom they expect; let it be remembred, that they are a People under judicial *Blindness* and *Induration*, *their Eyes being darkned that they should not see*; according as it is written, *God hath given them the Spirit of Slumber, Eyes that they should not see, and Ears that they should not hear unto this Day.* Rom. 4. 8, 9, 10,

UPON the whole, we may without Arrogance or Presumption conclude, I. That Jesus Christ is called the *Son of God* in Relation to his OFFICE. Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctify'd, and sent into the World, thou blasphemest; because I said I am the Son of God? *Joh. 10. 36.*

II. He is in this Respect ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός, the only begotten Son; for there is but ONE MEDIATOR between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus. *1 Tim. 2. 5.* The Apostle's Question is very pertinent here, unto which of the Angels said he at any Time, thou art my Son, this Day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son. *Heb. 1. 5.* Nothing can be more obvious than that our Blessed LORD is here declar'd to be constituted the *Son of God*, by that very Dispensation by which he was made our High Priest. And as such he is said to have obtain'd a more excellent Name than the Angels, who, in the Oeconomy of God, are subjected to the Loganthropos as their Head. The first Clause in this Passage is taken out of the second Psalm, where Son, and the anointed or the Christ, are convertible Terms: The last was spoken of Solomon, who built the Temple, and was an eminent Type of Christ; not of his Divine Nature, or the Manner of his Existence in the Beginning with God, but of his Office. *2 Sam. 7. 14. 1 Chron. 17. 13. Ch. 22. v. 10.* The PROMISE, (for it runs in that Form, *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son*) is interpreted, *Psal. 89. 27. I will make him my First-born, that is, higher than the Kings of*
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the Earth. III. Tho' the Office of Mediator includes the *Humanity*, Jesus Christ might, nevertheless, with respect to that *Office*, be denominated *the Son* before his Incarnation, as he was the *Mediator* of the *Old Testament*, *the Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World*, and called the *Seed of the Woman* in the first Promise. Besides, that he frequently *appear'd* under an *official* Character, even when he asserted his eternal Deity, taking to himself the *Name* and *Glories* of the *most high God*. Yea, he may be, and is, relative to his Office, said to be BROUGHT FORTH *from everlasting*, as in the great Counsel of the *blessed Three*, he was SET UP, or fore-ordin'd to be the *Messiah* before the World was made; *Prov.* 8. from *v.* 22. The whole *Context* proves his *Eternity*; and that he is a distinct *Person* from *him* with whom he was, as *Joh.* 1. 1. But it does not appear that the Expressions, *brought forth*, *brought up*, or *set up*, which seem to have the same *Import*, are used to signify the *peculiar Manner* of his *eternal Existence*: But rather the contrary appears, from his being said to *rejoice in the habitable part of the Earth*, and to have his *Delights with the Sons of Men*; which plainly points at his future *Incarnation*. IV. As we are *sure* that the Term *Son* belongs to our Saviour, as he was the *Messias*, we cannot with equal *Certainty* pronounce that it belongs to his *Divine Person* considered absolutely. Therefore, V. It is much more safe, to suppose that the Phrazeology of Scripture is *uniform* herein, that the Title of *Son* always imports his *Office* as *Theanthropos* or *Loganthropos*; than to admit of

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such a Construction and Application of that *Term*, as would necessarily infer his being a *voluntary Production*, or, which is the same, a *mere Creature*.

AND now I appeal to any unprejudic'd Person, whether I had not Reason to say, in my former *Strictures* on this Argument, † That the Boasts of the *Arians*, on the Head of the *Generation* of the Son, which they make the *Basis* of their Scheme, are vain and presumptuous, unless they could undeniably prove that the *GENERATION* of Christ mention'd in Scripture, or those Texts in which he is stiled the Son of God, are, in strictness of Speech, to be understood of his divine pre-existent Nature, without any respect to his being the *Messias*. If this is left doubtful ; If it is but highly probable, that those Places which call him the Son of God, or the only begotten Son, are meant of him, not as *Theos* or *Logos*, considered absolutely ; but as *Theanthropos* or *Loganthropos*, invested with the Office of Mediator ; then all the places that signify an *Inferiority* of the Son to the Father, may, according to the *Catholick Sense*, be accounted for, without the least Difficulty : And all the sophistical Reasonings of its Adversaries, for a *Subordination* of the Son to the Father with respect to his *divine Nature, Essence, and Attributes*, from the Topick of *Generation*, are but presumptuous Conclusions drawn from an *uncertain Hypothesis*.

THE very Name of a *derivative, dependent* God, who exists not by necessity of Nature ; and

consequently, who might not *have been*, and who may be *annihilated*, (for it is no Contradiction to imagine That *not to exist*, or *to cease to be*, which does not exist *necessarily*, and without *Dependance* on the Arbitrary *Will* of another) strikes so sensibly, that one would rather acquiesce in a *probable Opinion*, were it attended with some Difficulties, than admit an Absurdity so open to the meanest Capacities; and which renders *Christianity* the most inconsistent with itself, of any Religion in the World; condemning all *Creature worship* as *Idolatry*, which is a *moral Evil*, and yet heaping all sorts of divine Honours on more Creatures than one. For it is apparently a Contradiction to suppose a *middle Nature*, between God and the *Creature*, that is neither *necessarily existent*, nor yet *created*. † There is nothing so unconceivable as this in the Doctrine of *Three Persons in the Unity of the Godhead*, of one Substance, Power and Eternity.

† What Dr. Clark alledges in Answer to this Objection, "There can be no middle Beings between the Creator, and the Creature," is a poor shuffling Evasion. He says (*Answer to the Author of some Considerations*, &c. pag 228.) That "the Creator signifying (in Scripture Phrase) the Father of all Things, who created all things by his Son; it now there cannot possibly be any thing between the Supreme Father of all Things, and That System of Beings which we call the Creature; it will of Necessity follow, that the Son of God must be either the Supreme Father Himself, or else a *mere Creature*."

I. It is ambiguous what System of Beings it is, he calls the Creature. If he means the material World only, which is sometimes called [*the*] *Creature*, then it is not only possible that there may be, but certain that there are some Things between the supreme Father of all, and the Creature; even all the Sons of God, (Rom, 8. 19, 20, 21.) all intelligent Beings. Nor

is it less *certain* that this is nothing to his Purpose. But if by that System of Beings he calls *the Creature*, he means all the *Works* of God as the *supreme Cause*, all the *Productions* of his *WILL* and *POWER*, *substantially* differing from Himself, then there neither is, nor can be, any *Thing* or *Substance* between God and the *Creature*. The Words *Creator* and *Creature* include all Beings whatsoever. And whatever exists not by *Necessity of Nature*, but derived its Being from the Arbitrary Will and Power of another, is the *very Creature* of that other, and as much a *Creature*, however dignify'd in other Respects, as any *Thing* in that whole System of Beings which is called *the Creature*. And such a *Creature* this Author makes the Son of God to be.

II. The *Creator* signifies (in Scripture-Revelations) not only That divine Person, who is distinguish'd by the *Name of Father*, but it also signifies That divine Person who is distinguish'd by the *Name of Son*. For the Creation is ascrib'd to the Son, as emphatically as to the Father, and in the very same Terms. That *God created all Things by Jesus Christ* (supposing that Passage to be meant of the first Creation) is no more inconsistent with the Son's being Himself *the Creator* in a strict and proper Sense, than it is inconsistent with his being *the Redeemer*, or *the Lord that bought us*, that *God redeem'd us by Jesus Christ*: Which, tho' it be no Scripture-Phrase, no more than it is, that *the Father of all Things created all Things by his Son*, is as much a Scripture-Truth, as it is that *God created all Things by Jesus Christ*. Yet he is not a Christian who will deny that Christ is *strictly* and *properly* our *Redeemer*; and he is expressly stiled by the Apostle, *the Lord that bought us*; as I have undeniably prov'd in another Place; *Advice, Marg. p. 20. to 24.* Therefore, if the Doctor means That *the Creator* signifies in Scripture, the Person of the Father, *exclusively* of the Person of the Son, what he says is false, and contrary to the whole Tenor of divine Revelation.

Yet *the Son* is not *the Father Himself*, taking these Words in an Evangelical Sense, (for simply as *Creator*, He is the Father of all Things made) because the Scripture, which is an infallible Principle of Truth, manifestly distinguishes the *Person* of the Son, from the *Person* of the Father. Neither are there *two Creators*, because the same Scripture plainly reveals, that the *Father and Son ARE ONE*; one in *Nature*, and *Will*, in *Power*, and *Glory*. And how difficult soever it may be for the Doctor to comprehend this, there is nothing in it so shocking to natural Reason, as his Notion of a *Substance* or Being that exists not by *Necessity of Nature*, nor was yet *created*; which is an unavoidable Contradiction to the Reason of all Mankind.

IT is not necessary for us to know the *intrinsical* Relations between the *blessed Three*; or the *distinct Manner* of their *Subsistence* in the Godhead, or by what *proper Names* to distinguish them as divine Persons absolutely consider'd, (tho' the *Word* or *Logos* seems to be a more *abstracted* Name of *him* that was *incarnate*, than the Term *Son*, or any other Name that is not common to the Three Persons.) Something of this we may come to know hereafter, when we are made perfect, and can understand the Language of Heaven. At present it suffices that they are always spoken of in Scripture as *distinct Persons*. That they are made known by *extrinsical* Relations, Names and Attributes. That *equal* Godhead is ascrib'd to them. And consequently, that they are, and must be, *one* in Nature, Will and Power. This is enough to direct us in our Faith and Worship, our Trust and Obedience. More might satisfy our Curiosity, but is not necessary to our Religion.

HERE we have sure footing. We are not in danger of detracting from the *Personality* or *Divinity* of any of the divine Persons, or from their unconceivable *Unity* as *one God*, whilst we firmly believe *That it is essential to the eternal Godhead, that in the Unity of the divine Nature or Essence, there should be three Persons or Subsistences, of one Substance, Power and Eternity, who in Scripture, are distinguish'd by the Names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and by other relative, and personal Properties.* This is my Faith, Thus far the Scriptures plainly lead us. And here we may cast Anchor, with-

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out entering into the fathomless Depths of an eternal *Generation* and *Proceſſion*; where we may looſe ourſelves, conceive diſhonourably of God, and find it hard to ſteer our Courſe without mingling with the *ÆONES* of the *Valentinians*, or making out to ourſelves a CREATED GOD with the *Arians*.

BUT after all, as I will not affirm that *Generation* belongs to the divine Perſons, conſidered abſolutely, neither will I peremptorily deny it. As it is not improbable the Terms *Father* and *Son* are purely *Oeconomical*, ſo an eternal neceſſary *Generation*, or *Emanation* is not impoſſible, nor can ever be prov'd to involve a Contradiction. It ſufficiently answers my Purpose, and ſhews the *Uncertainty* of that *fiſt Principle* on which Dr. Clark, and the reſt of the *Arian Sect* build their Doctrine of a derivative, dependent God, That they can neither certainly prove that the *Deity* aſcrib'd to our Lord in Scripture, is founded in his *Sonſhip*; nor yet ſhew the *Impoſſibility* of ſuch an eternal neceſſary *Generation*, as would, confeſſedly, infer his being equally *Self-exiſtent* with the Father. Both which they are oblig'd to do, before they impoſe upon Mankind the Novelty of a created God, as the Author and Object of their Religion.

THE *Orthodox* are not concern'd to bring any one Argument from the Relations of *Paternity* and *Filiation*, to prove their Doctrine. They can, without meddling with that inexplicable Theory, abundantly ſhew, That there is but ONE living and true GOD, everlaſting, without Body, Parts,

‘ or Passions ; of infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness ; the Maker and Preserver of all Things, both visible and invisible : And that, in the Unity of this GODHEAD, (or divine Nature, as it is in the Latin,) there be three Persons of one Substance, Power, and Eternity, the FATHER, the SON, and the Holy Ghost.’ † This they can prove from those many and plain Texts that assert the Oneness or Unity of God ; and which, without any Restriction, ascribe all the Characters of Divinity, the incommunicable Perfections of the eternal Godhead, to the sacred Three ; who are indeed, distinguish’d by personal Properties and Actions, but never by any Diversity of Nature, or by any absolute Perfection of Being.

BUT if the *Arians* will insist upon it, that Generation belongs to the *pre-existent* Nature, or Essence of the Son, or the Manner of his Existence, in the beginning, with God ; it behoves them not only to prove this, with irrefragable Arguments, which they may find a hard Task ; but at the same time to demonstrate, that this Generation is not by absolute Necessity of Nature, but by the sovereign Will of the Father ; which is impossible to be done. If they can do neither, their whole Scheme is built upon a precarious Foundation ; and their Faith in a dependent God will be found as vain and groundless, as their Notion of a middle Nature between created and uncreated, that was

† The first Article of the Church of England, entitled, Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.

neither made out of nothing, nor is the necessarily existent Substance, is manifestly Chimerical, and absurd to Reason.

If the Son was eternally begotten of the Father, by absolute Necessity of Nature, this will, as Dr. Clark expressly owns, infer his * *Self-existence* and *Independency*. It must be, therefore a dangerous

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* The late Bishop of Gloucester, in his *Certain Propositions*, &c, (Which some have taken care to reprint of late, as being, perhaps, unwilling any Thing should be buried in Oblivion, which derogates from the Absolute Godhead of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.) Seems to distinguish between *Necessity* and *Independency* of Being. He would be thought to believe (tho' he does not positively affirm) That the Son had his Existence from Eternity, by way of necessary Emanation from the Father. Yet, as he sets out with this Observation, That the Name of God is used in more Senses than one in Holy Scripture (which is false, if he means that it is sou's'd, when mention'd absolutely, and in the singular Number). so, he expressly affirms that the Father alone is God in the absolutely highest Sense: Tho' in a Sense next to that, the Name of God may belong to other Beings. He makes *Self-existence* to be the highest of all Perfections. This he appropriates to the Person of the Father alone, who alone is, in reference to his Manner of Existence, an absolutely perfect Being. And as it is a flat Contradiction, with him, to say that the Son is *Self-existent*; so he says, it is a like contradictory to affirm him to be a Being absolutely perfect in Reference to his Manner of Existence, or to say that he has the Perfections of absolute Independence, and of being the FIRST ORIGINAL of all Things. (It seems then it is no Contradiction to affirm of him, that he has the Perfection of being the SECOND ORIGINAL of all Things.) And in one Word, he ranks the Son and Holy Ghost among those Beings to which to the Father gave that they exist: which he also expresses by their ENTIRE DEPENDANCE on him. So that he runs the whole Length that Dr. Clark has done; only with this Difference, that he supposes the Son's having his Existence by eternal necessary Emanation from the Father, to be consistent with his Ex-
plication.

But there is an insuperable Difficulty, or rather a manifest Absurdity in this Scheme, (of which it seems Dr. Clark was a-ware in his *Scripture-Doctrine*, &c.) It is impossible to reconcile an eternal necessary

*necessary Emanation; or Generation, with an intire Dependence, or the absolute Negation of Independency of Being. If the Bishop means that the Son has his Existence by Necessity of Nature, yet derives his Being from the Will of the Father, in a way of proper Causality, what he affirms is a Contradiction in Terms. If he only means that the Son could not be without the Father; it may, as truly be said, that the Father could not be without the Son. Whatever exists by Necessity of Nature, exists independently on any other Nature distinct from itself: And whatever exists independently on any other Nature distinct from itself, is Self-existent, or does not owe its Being to any other. Again, What does not exist by necessity of Nature, cannot, without a manifest Contradiction, be said to be eternal and necessary: And whatever is not eternal and necessary, can never have its Existence by eternal necessary Emanation. For the Word *Emanation*, whatever be meant by it, alters not the Case. What is necessary, is necessary, and what is eternal, is eternal, whether it proceeds, or does not proceed, from any Thing else that is necessary and eternal. So that if the Son eternally and necessarily proceeds from the Father, he is, together with the Father, the eternal necessary Being; and no more depends, as to his Existence, on the Father, than the Father depends upon himself.*

I cannot, therefore, think that the Bishop's Propositions answer his pompous Title, of NOT contradictory to NATURAL REASON. It being not only contradictory, but even ridiculous to Reason, to talk of a Things being from another, by eternal, necessary Emanation, and yet to make it depend upon that other, in any other Sense, than that other depends upon itself.

The Comparison he brings from our vulgar Philosophy is nothing to his Purpose. If LIGHT doth exist by a necessary Emanation from the SUN, it exists as necessarily as doth the Sun: And the Sun can exist no more without Light, than Light can exist without the Sun. If the Sun can exist without the Existence of Light, then Light is not a necessary, but an accidental Emanation from the Sun: Whereas if Light is a necessary Emanation from the Sun, it is impossible to conceive the Existence of the One, without the Existence of the other also. To say that the Sun is an Order of Nature before the Light which necessarily proceeds from it, but not in order of Time, or Duration; is to say something that has no Meaning. I shall not contend with the Bishop, how old the Distinction between these TWO PRIORITIES may have been. But he must be too old to Philosophize, who can take it to be any other than an imaginary Distinction, a mere *Ens Rationis*, that can never bear the Weight of a first, and secondary Numen, intirely depending upon the first. If Light exists by a necessary Emanation from the Sun, so as to exclude all Priority in order of Time; it is absolutely of the same Duration,

Presumption in *him* to deny his *Self-existence*, or *Necessary-Existence*, unless he could demonstrably prove that an *eternal necessary Generation* is a Contradiction ; or bring plain *Scripture-Evidence*, that the Son was begotten *not* by Necessity of Nature, *but* by the Will and Power of the Father, in Opposition to such Necessity ; which if I mistake not, he does not pretend to do.

IF it be said that the very Notion of *begetting*, supposes a proper Act of the *Father's Will*.

I answer, I. This cannot be prov'd, unless we were able to *define* the *Manner* of the Generation spoken of ; which, it is acknowledg'd, we are not.

II. Tho'

with the *Sun*. And what is *absolutely* of the *same Duration* with another, cannot possibly be, in any *real* Sense, *after* that other. I could not therefore but wonder a Learned Man should lay so great a *Stress*, as the Bishop does, on a Distinction that has no Foundation in the *Nature* of Things, but is purely a *Figment* of Men's own Brains. If any Thing was *always* from another by an Emanation *absolutely* necessary, it is manifestly a Contradiction, to suppose any *real Priority* of the one to the other. And it is much more so, if this *necessary Emanation* is suppos'd to be *absolutely eternal*.

But if his Lordship by the *Illustration* he brings from *our vulgar Philosophy*, meant no more than this, That there is an *imaginary*, not a *real Priority* of the Father to the Son ; and an *imaginary*, not a *real Dependence* of the Son upon the Father, as to his *Existence*, who will may, for me, indulge these fond *Imaginations* after him. But let them not impose it upon the World, as *not contradictory* to *Natural Reason*, That such an *imaginary Priority*, and *Dependence*, without any *real Priority*, or *real Dependence*, is sufficient to prove that the Son and Holy Ghost are to be plac'd among those Beings that *intirely depend* on the Father as to their *Existence* ; or sufficient to support the Doctrine of *one supreme God*, who is *absolutely perfect* as to the Manner of his *Existence*, and *two subordinate Gods*, who are not *absolutely perfect* in Reference to their Manner of *Existence*.

II. Tho' an *Arbitrary Communication* of Being, manifestly excludes *necessity of Being*; yet that may be, in some Sense, *voluntary*, which is also necessary; as the *moral Attributes* of God. God is voluntarily *Just* and *Good*, otherwise these Attributes are not *moral Excellencies* in him: Yet nevertheless, he is both *Good* and *Just*, by absolute *Necessity of Nature*; and these Attributes are as *essential* to him as any *Natural Perfection* of Being. If any immanent Acts of God are *eternal* and *necessary*; if God *eternally* and *necessarily* knows and loves himself, which are Acts proper to an intelligent Nature, why may not the Generation of the Son, be *eternal* and *necessary* also, in the same absolute Sense that the *Will* of the Father is so? If God can no more *not love* himself, than he can *not be*, so that his loving himself, tho' it be, in a Sense, *voluntary*, yet depends not on an *Arbitrary Act* of his *Will*, but is as *necessary* as his *Being*. Why may we not say that the Fathers begetting the Son was *truly* necessary? That he *necessarily* and *eternally* willed the Generation of the Son, as he *necessarily* and *eternally* willed a Complacence in himself, in which the divine Felicity consists? And consequently, that he was *always*, and as *necessarily* FATHER, as he was *always* and *necessarily* GOD *blessed forever*? In this Sense, the *Will* of the Father might be concern'd in the Generation of the Son, yet *that* not depend on an *arbitrary Act* of the Father's *Will*, that might possibly have been *otherwise*.

BUT if it could be prov'd a Contradiction, That the *Will* of the Father should be concern'd
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in the Generation of the Son, supposing it to be by absolute *Necessity of Nature*; all that would follow from hence is, That his *Will* was not at all concern'd herein; as certainly it *was not* in any proper way of *Causality* or *Efficiency*: But this would be no Argument against a *natural* and *necessary Fecundity* of the divine Essence, into which many of the Orthodox Fathers resolv'd the Generation of the Son: And that in Opposition to the *Arians*, who argued as Dr. *Clark* does, that the Fathers generating the Son *was not* by virtue of any *innate* or *essential* Property of the divine Nature, which would prove the Son to be of the *same Essence*, and *equally Self-existent* with the Father, but that he deriv'd his Being, *ἐκ θεοῦ*, by favour from God; or, as the *Doctor* words it, *from the Will and Power of the Father, as from the supreme Cause*.

I must be confess'd that some of the *Ancients*, who adhered to the Catholick Doctrine of the *true eternal Godhead* of Christ, were not very *consistent* with themselves on this Head. For tho' they sometimes asserted a *natural Fecundity* of the divine Essence, and lookt upon it as an Absurdity, to suppose, that the *Deity* should be destitute of that *Property*, which they conceiv'd to be a *Perfection*: And tho' they affirm'd that the Father *was essentially* a Father, and that the Son was *of the Father*, and *in him essentially*, and according to Nature, [*κατὰ φύσιν καὶ ὁμοούσιος*] and that nothing could be *coeternal* with the Father, but what was *naturally* and *necessarily* from him; in Consequence of which they must hold that the Generation of
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the Son, being *natural*, was, ὑπὲρ αἰτίας, *above* any *Cause*, properly speaking: Yet, at other Times, they seem to forget this; and not only use the Terms *Principle*, *Fountain*, *Root*, but plainly assert that the Father was the *Original*, *Author*, and *Cause* of the Son, and *Superior* to him κατὰ τὸν τῆς Αἰτίας λόγον, with respect to *Causality*. It is true, they could not use the Word *Cause* in a proper Sense, because they attributed the *Generation* of the Son to a *natural* and *essential* Act: But by such Expressions they gave Advantage to the *Arians*, and ran into Self-Contradictions. And it were to be wish'd, some of our *modern Divines*, who have deserv'd great Commendation, for their excellent Labours in Defence of the Truth, had not too *implicitly* follow'd them in this; and been led into the like Inconsistencies, by an Application of *Words*, that ought rather to be exploded out of the *Christian Theology*, as having no Foundation either in *Reason*, or *Revelation*. For if the Son of God be God himself, and of the *same Essence* with the Father, to which *Essence*, it belongs to be *uncaused*, or to exist necessarily (which they believ'd and maintain'd) he can have no *Cause* or *Author*, but is as much without *Original*, or *Beginning* of Being as the Father himself. On the other Hand, whatsoever hath a *proper Cause*, or *Original* of Being, must have *Limits* of Being, and that can never enter into our Notion of God.

NOR is it at all necessary, that those who assert the *eternal Generation* of the Son, as God, should admit of such Terms as *Author*, *Cause*, *Original*,
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which were disliked by some of the *Schoolmen* themselves, as inconsistent with the proper Notion of Deity: Since the *Arians* can never shew the Impossibility of an eternal necessary Emanation of the divine Essence, which excludes all Causality or Origination, taking these Words, in a strict *Philosophical* (that is, true,) Sense. Nor can they allege *one Text* of Scripture, whence it will indubitably follow, that the Son deriv'd his Being, from the *Will* of the Father, as an *Efficient*.

HERE it will not be improper to consider what *Dr. Clark* alleges to this Purpose. † He says, That *tho' the Scripture has no where in express Terms, declared the Generation of the Son to be by the Will of the Father; yet it does so by plain Consequence, when our Lord says concerning himself, Joh. 5. 26. As the FATHER hath Life in himself, so hath he GIVEN to the Son to have Life in Himself*. To which I answer, I. It is dubitable, whether the Term *Son* in this Text, does not signify the *Man Christ-Jesus*, as united with the *Word* or *Logos*. None doubts but the Person of the Father had a *special Efficiency* in the *Incarnation* of the *WORD*. So was the *Will* of the *ETERNAL THREE*. Wherefore when he cometh into the *World*, he saith, *Sacrifice, and Offering thou wouldst not, but a Body hast THOU PREPARED me, Heb. 10. 5*. II. It is also dubitable whether *Life* here ought not to

† Reply to Mr. Nelson, pag. 113, 114.

be understood to signify a quickning Power. The Word *for*, in this *Verse*, refers to what had been immediately said in the *Verse* foregoing; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.* Then follows, *For as the Father hath life in himself; or a Power to impart Life to whom he pleases; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; or a Power to quicken dead Souls, and raise dead Bodies at his Pleasure.* This Sense seems to be the more probable, That the last *Adam* is said to be made a quickning or enlivening Spirit. And if this be the true Sense of the Words, then the Term *Son* is not Characteristical of the *Word* as *GOD*, but as sustaining the Character of the *Messias*, in relation to which he is both *the Son of God*, and *the Son of Man*, and actually receiv'd Power and Authority from the Father. Therefore it follows in the very next *Verse*, *And hath given him Authority to execute Judgment ALSO, BECAUSE he is the Son of Man.* So that here is given to *Christ* in the *OEconomy* of *God*, not only a Faculty to raise, or quicken the Dead, but also a judiciary Power over them: And that as being the Son of a Man; by which Dispensation he became also *the Son of God made of a Woman.* Luke 1. 32, 35. Gal. 4. 4. Nor is there any Difficulty in this, that he who, as *God*, hath the same original, supreme Authority and Power with the Father, should in an inferior Nature graciously assum'd by him, be said to receive a Power or Authority which belong'd not to that

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Nature, nor could be exercis'd by it, separate from the *Divine*.

Now, if by *Life* in the formention'd Text, we are to understand some *Virtue* or *Power* to impart *Life* to others, which is in *God*, the *Father*, *Word*, and *Spirit*, originally and without *Derivation* ; but was, by way of Dispensation, devolv'd on the *Logos* as to the Exercise of it ; because of the *blessed Three*, he only became the *Mediator*, became the *Son of Man*, and so was most fit to be the immediate vital *Head* of Men (over whom he also acquired a *new Power* by right of *Redemption*, which he administers in a *new Manner*, differing from the first Government of *God* over *Man* in a State of Innocency) what is this to that *Life* which he possesses essentially as *God*, and which can never come under the Respect of a *Donation*, without making him a mere *Creature*?

III. Granting this to be meant of the *natural Life* of the *Logos*, who in the *Beginning* was with *God*, and was *God* ; it does not follow that it was given by way of *Benevolence*, or as a mere *Effect* of the *Father's Will*. It might be necessarily and eternally given ; with respect to which he may be said to have *Life in himself*, that is, by necessity of *Nature*, even as the *Father* hath *Life in himself*. Hence he is said to be *Life* in the abstract, *eternal Life*, which Title is join'd with that of the *true God*, 1 *Joh.* 5. 20. And to be : ὁ ζῶν, *he that lives*, *Rev.* i. 18. as well as to be the *Prince* or *Author* of *Life* to others. So that the Term GIVEN which *Dr. Clark* distinguishes with Capitals, may consist with an *eternal necessary Emmanation* : As
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when we say the *Sun* GIVES *Light* or *Heat*, tho' these are a *natural* and *necessary* Efflux from the *Sun*.

THIS however we may venture to be positive in, that the *Text* alledged by the *Doctor* is far from giving a plain *consequential* Evidence that the Son was *generated* by the *Will* of the Father, in a Contradistinction to his being begotten by *Necessity* of *Nature*.

BUT we are told by him in the same *Page*, That 'whatever is caused by an intelligent Being, 'is caused by the Will of that Being. Otherwise it 'is not (in Truth and Reality) caused by that Being at all, but by some superior Cause, (be it Necessity or Fate, or whatever it be;) under which, 'the intelligent Being is in such Case, as much an 'Instrument only, as if it was wholly unintelligent'. What kind of *superior Causality* may be ascribed to *Fate*, a Word without any Sense or Meaning, I leave to *Philosophers* to determine; and particularly to *Dr. Clark* himself. I would however observe, that he here argues upon a *false Hypothesis*. For he supposes that the Father is the proper Cause of the Son, and the Son the real Effect of the Father's *Will* and *Power*, which he has nowhere proved; and which will never be granted by any who, contending for the common Faith, considers what would be the *Consequence* of such a *Concession*. I readily allow, that whatever is in Strictness of Speech, caused by an intelligent Being, is caused by the *Will* of that Being. But it does not therefore follow that every Act of,

every *Emanation* from such a Being, is in that Sense *voluntary* as to exclude *Necessity*. For some *Acts* may be *natural* and *necessary*. And if any *Acts* of God are *so*, the Father's *generating* the Son may be of *that kind*; And consequently, his *Paternity* be an *intrinsic* Character, that depends no more on his *Will* than his own *Existence* does; and is as *Essential* to him as *Eternity*, *Immensity*, and the like.

I F it be urg'd that this is to make him an *Instrument only*, in the *Generation* of the Son? I answer, it is to make him neither *Cause* nor *Instrument* in this Case; but to lay the whole *Stress* on the *Fecundity*, or *Emanative Nature* of the *Divine Essence*, which is as *necessary* as the *Essence itself*. It would be very improper to say, that God is the *Cause* or *Instrument* in relation to his own *Existence* (and equally so, to ascribe *that* to any other *superior Cause*, be it *Necessity* or *Fate*, or *whatever* it be;) for he *exists* by *absolute Necessity* of Nature. And if the *Divine Essence*, or *Self-existent Substance* be *naturally* and *necessarily generative*, which can never be disprov'd, the Terms, *Cause* or *Instrument* can have no place in the *Generation* of the Son. Only, if it may be said, that God *willed* his own *Existence*, it may be said, that he *willed* the *Generation* of the Son likewise.

W H R T E V E R Way, therefore, we take T H E G E N E R A T I O N O F J E S U S C H R I S T, it can never bear that *dead Weight*, (for such I may call the Absurdity of a *dependent God*, who exists not
by

by *Necessity of Nature*,) which Dr. Clark, and his *Fraternity* would lay upon it.

IF it is understood of his *pre-existent Nature*, the Possibility of an *eternal necessary* Generation, which they grant would infer *Independency* and *Self-existence*, is enough to invalidate any Arguments can be drawn from that Quarter, for a *Subordination* of the *Godhead* of the Son, to the *Godhead* of the Father: Since, as Dr. Clark observes, ‘*the Scripture has no where distinctly declared, in what particular metaphysical Manner, the Son derives his Being or Essence from the Father*’. † He might very justly say, That the Scripture no where distinctly declares, that the Son derived his metaphysical Nature or Essence from the Father at all. For when it *Speaks of the WORD before his Incarnation*, there is no mention made of *created* or *emitted*, or *begotten*, or *emanated*, but only that he WAS, in the *Beginning*, (*from everlasting*;) that he WAS with God, and that he WAS GOD.

AND if they could demonstrate the *Impossibility* of such a *Generation*, as is by *absolute Necessity of Nature*; if they could evidently shew that it implies a *Contradiction*; they are as far from their Point as ever; for the *Consequence* would be, not that the eternal *Logos* is an *inferior* or *made* God, *subject* to the *Will* and *Power* of him, in whom he *lives*, *moves*, and has his *Being*, (which in *Scripture-Style*, expresses the *intire Dependence*

† *Scripture Doctrine*, &c. §. 13. Pag. 272.

of *Creatures* upon the *Creator*;) but that the Name of *Son* is *OEconomical*; and not at all exprefive of the *metaphysical Manner* of his Divine perfonal *Subfiftence* in the eternal Godhead. Under this Consideration the *Son* or *Meffias* is subordinate to the Father who *begat* him; and the *human Nature* subordinate to that *divine Perfon* who unconceivably *inhabited* it, or *united* with it. For in this wonderful Dispensation the *first* Perfon is represented as the immediate *Author* or *Parent* of THAT HOLY THING which was *born* of the blessed *Virgin*; the *second* Perfon as *taking upon him the FORM OF A SERVANT*; and the *third* Perfon as replenifhing the *Holy Jefus* with all *Gifts* and *Graces*. He was *anointed with the Holy Ghoft*, and with *Power*. That we conceive of them under the Notion of *first*, *second* and *third*, argues no *real Priority* of one Perfon to Another, confider'd absolutely; for in *Eternity* there is neither *first* nor *laft*: But fuch is the Poverty of our Underftandings, that we cannot conceive of Perfons, or Things, but by a *Succession* of Thoughts. And becaufe in the *O Economy* of Salvation, they are called *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoft*, it is natural to call the *Father* the *First*, the *Son* the *Second*, and the *Holy Ghoft* the *Third* Perfon; tho' they are not exprefly diftinguifh'd in Scripture, by *First*, *Second* and *Third*. Nor is there a certain Order always obferv'd by the infpired Writers in fpeaking of them, but fometimes the *Father* is put before the *Son*, and the *Son* fometimes before the *Father*.

NOW, the *Subordination* of the Son as *Messias* to the Person of the Father, no more argues his being in *all Respects inferior* to him, than it argues his *absolute Subordination* to the *third Person*, That as Dr. Clark observes, † ‘ *The Holy Spirit is described in the New Testament, as the immediate Author and Worker of all Miracles, even of those done by our Lord himself; and as the Conductor of Christ in all the Actions of his Life, during his State of Humiliation here upon Earth.*’

THIS is what they never can get over. The Scripture, it is acknowledg’d, has not defin’d the particular *Manner* of the Son’s *Generation*. They can never shew the *Impossibility* of such an *eternal necessary Generation*, or *Emanation*, as proves the Son to be of the *same Essence*, and *same Independency of Being* with the Father. And if they could, they can never demonstrate from *Scripture* or *Reason*, that *Generation* is to be understood of the *divine Persons* at all, considered absolutely. Yea, upon Supposition that an *eternal necessary Generation* was a *Contradiction*, it would unavoidably follow from the Characters of *Supremacy*, from the *divine Titles, Attributes, Works, and Worship* ascrib’d and given to our LORD in Scripture, and in the highest *Eminence of Expression*; that his *Sonship* is relative only to that *inferior Nature*, and *Office* which the eternal *Word* assum’d, as an *Expression* of his *sovereign Grace* to Mankind.

† Script. Doct. §. 28. Pag. 301.

AND either way, those Places which import an *Inferiority*, must be understood of *Jesus* as the *Messias*. An *eternal necessary* Generation is inconsistent with *Dependency*, or an arbitrary *Derivation* of Being : And if he is the Son of God only in respect of *Office* and *Humanity*, that can never prove him to be *inferior* to ; or *intirely* to depend on the Father's *Will* and *Power*, as to his pre-existent Nature.

SOME, it is probable, will be apt to argue, that the *Orthodox* confess our blessed Lord to be the Son of God, as to his *divine Nature* and *Essence* ; and that they cannot shew the *Impossibility* of his being *generated* by the *Will* and *Power* of the Father, as that is oppos'd to his being *eternally begotten* by *Necessity of Nature* : And consequently, that by asserting the Son's being God in the *highest Sense*, they may be guilty of obscuring the *Father's Glory*, and putting a *dependent Being* upon a Level with him who alone is *supreme, independent* and without *Original*.

BUT to this I answer, I. That I should never build the Notion of a *made God*, on what the *Concessions* of other Men might possibly imply. II. Tho' the *Orthodox* cannot *a priori* shew the *Impossibility* of an *Arbitrary Generation*, (for the whole Universe was brought forth, or produc'd by the *Will* and *Power* of the *Father* and *Son* ; and he who hath begotten the Drops of Dew, is not only the *Father of the Rain*, † but of every other Crea-

† Job. 38. 28, 29.

ture which he *hath* gendered ; and more especially *the Father of Spirits* :) They can, nevertheless, *a posteriori* prove the Impossibility of it, in *this Case* : Because *such* a Generation is absolutely inconsistent with the Attributions of GODHEAD made to our Lord in *Scripture*, and manifestly reduces him *who made all Things* to the Rank and Order of *Creatures*.

To which I may add, III. That the *Orthodox* are under no Necessity to *affirm* or *deny* any thing concerning an *eternal Generation*, in their Disputes with the *Arians* ; save only to shew that the Arguments drawn from it to establish a *Subordination of Gods*, are not conclusive. They assert the *Equality* of the Son with the Father, not (merely) because he is *the Son of the Father*, (tho' they refuse not any collateral Evidence *that* may yeild,) but because the *divine Person* called the *Son*, for some Reasons which they know, because revealed, and perhaps for a Reason they know nothing of, because not revealed ; is, in *Scripture*, declared to be GOD (and *equal with God*) in such a Sense as is incompatible with *Dependency* and *Subordination* of Being. Whereas our *Modern Arians*, concluding from the *Generation* of the Son, that he *is*, and *must be*, in *all* Respects, a subordinate Person, and *inferior* to the Father in *Nature* and *Attributes* ; are oblig'd not only to prove, That Generation is, in Strictness of Speech, to be understood of him *before* his *Incarnation*, and *without* Respect to his *Office* ; but that it is *impossible* it should be absolute-

ly *eternal* and *necessary*: Otherwise, (which is really the Case) they conclude *definitively* from an *uncertain Hypothesis*, because the *Scriptures* have, confessedly, left the *Manner* of it *undecided*.

I F any of the *Orthodox* have been too lavish in their *Concessions* on this Head; or too *dogmatical* in their *Construction* and *Application* of those *Texts* in which our Saviour is stiled the *Son of God*. If at the same time that they have, with *invincible Arguments*, prov'd the *Equality* of the Son with the Father, in all *absolute Perfections* of Being, in every Thing that is *essential* to the divine Nature, or belongs to the Father *qua est deus*, as he is God, they have affirmed some Things concerning the *Relations* of *Paternity* and *Filiation*, scarce *reconcilable* with that *Equality*. This can be no just *Prejudice* against the great *Truths* they believed, and maintained; and those who come after them, may be allow'd, to avoid some *Inconveniencies* which they might not be aware of, without *differing* from them, or abating ought of their Zeal as to the Main of the Doctrine.

T H E Y who believe that there is but one living and true God; and that the Father, Word, and Holy Ghost are that one God; and who also, hold the *personal Distinction*, which the *Scripture* plainly makes between the *Blessed Three*, in the *O Economy* of our Salvation; may well bear with one another, and esteem each other, sound in the Faith, notwithstanding any different Conceptions they may have
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concerning *the Generation* of *Jesus Christ*. Especially, seeing this *Catholick Doctrine* may be consistently held, and maintain'd, without so much as *determining* in our own Thoughts, whether *Generation* belongs to his *divine personal Subsistence*, or not. But no *Scripture-Rules* of *Moderation*, or *Charity* can oblige them to have the *same Sentiments* of those, who *deny* the *true eternal GODHEAD* of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, and of the *blessed Spirit*; or who assert a *Plurality*, and *Subordination* of GODS, to whom *divine Honours* are due. Here the *Difference* is plainly *fundamental*, and affects *every* thing that is *absolutely Christian* in our Religion.



T H E
G R O U N D S
O F T H E
Present Differences,
A M O N G T H E
L O N D O N M I N I S T E R S.

P A R T I I.

B E I N G
C O N S I D E R A T I O N S on the *Profess'd Agree-*
ment of the *Non-Subscribing Ministers*, with the
Subscribers, in their Sentiments concerning the
D O C T R I N E of the T R I N I T Y.

W H E R E I N
Some of the Principal P A S S A G E S in both Parts
of their R E P L Y are impartially examin'd, and the S U B -
C R I B E R S clear'd from the Charge of Imposition.

By JOHN CUMMING, M. A.
MINISTER of the *Scots-Church* in L O N D O N.



L O N D O N: Printed in the Year, 1720.

THE
 GROUNDS
 OF THE
 Present Differences
 AMONG THE
 London Ministers.

PART II.

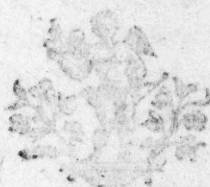
BEING

CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PRESENT
 STATE OF THE NON-RESISTANCE
 DOCTRINE OF THE MINISTRY.

WHEREIN

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE
 NON-RESISTANCE ARE
 EXAMINED AND THE
 CHARGE OF IMPERSONATION
 IS PROVED.

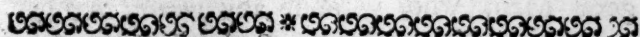
By JOHN CUMMINGS, M.A.
 Minister of the Church of England in London.



LONDON: Printed in the Year 1790.



THE
G R O U N D S
OF THE
Present Differences, &c.



C H A P. I.

The Introduction. The Rise of the following Considerations ; or, The Claim of Justice insisted on by the Non-subscribers; Reply, Part. I. pag. 6. Shewed that we could not give the Account mention'd in the first Branch of their Demand, without clashing with our Brethren, and being thought to intend it as a Reflection on their Conduct : Of the MAIN THING insisted on, or the PROFESS'D AGREEMENT with the SUBSCRIBERS in their Sentiments concerning the DOCTRINE of the TRINITY. A preliminary Question. An Examination of the Passages themselves in which this Profession is made, or of the positive and publick Evidences of such Agreement,
in

in their Concessions, and Declaration of Faith. The needless, and seemingly design'd Ambiguity of them detected. Prov'd, That they are as much an Evidence of Agreement with the Followers of Dr. Clark, as with the Subscribing-Ministers.



H A T no effectual Means could be yet thought on, to compose the *late Differences* between the SUBSCRIBING and NON-SUBSCRIBING *Ministers* in LONDON, must needs be Matter of Grief to all good Men, who, without any *partial Attachments* inconsistent with the *Catholick Spirit* of the Gospel, sincerely desire the universal Good of the Reformed Churches. Divisions among *Ministers*, whatever there may be of divine Discipline in them, cannot but be attended with some Guilt. And tho' *both Sides* may be more innocent in the Sight of God, who penetrates into our inmost Thoughts and Intentions, than they may appear to Men to be, yet it cannot reasonably be supposed that *each Side* should be *equally* to blame either for the *Rise* or *Continuance* of our unhappy Contentions.

I can truly say that I know of *no other* Spring of the late Conduct of the *subscribing Ministers*, in the Stand they have made against the encroaching Errors of our Day, than a hearty and well govern'd Zeal for that great and distinguishing Doctrine of the Gospel, which must determine the Fate of *Christianity itself*. They were neither
prompted

prompted, nor aw'd, nor brib'd, nor manag'd by those who have the *Supports of this World at their Disposal*. They were not influenc'd by any *personal Respects, Prejudices, or Engagements* whatsoever. What they did was, as far as I could ever understand, from a *Conscience of Duty*, as Persons *set for the Defence of the Gospel*: Without any Design to invade the *Liberty* of others, or to injure any of their *Brethren* in their *Reputation, Usefulness, or worldly Interests*. On the contrary, they hop'd that the *Method* they propos'd would be for the *Honour of Protestant Dissenters* in general; and particularly wipe off that *Reproach*, which the *New Sect of Arians* thought it for their Purpose to cast upon the *Generality of the London Ministers*, as if they had departed from the *Catholick Doctrine* of the *TRINITY*, and espous'd the *New-Scheme*.

AND as a just Concern for that *Doctrine*, the *Belief* of which is a necessary Ingredient in all *Christian Worship and Obedience*, mov'd them to take the most expeditious, and most unexceptionable Way they could think of, at once to assert the *TRUTH*, and clear themselves from an *Imputation* which they apprehended might be prejudicial to It, as it was made a *popular Argument* with which to deceive the *Simple and Unwary*; so their tender Regard for their *Brethren*, who thought fit to act a different part, induc'd them, immediately after the *Separation*, to pass a *Vote* in their *BODY*, That we should not censure any of our *Brethren*, as not holding the same *Faith* with us, merely, for their refusing to declare as we did. After we had

unanimously pass'd this *Vote*, we thought it hard to find ourselves represented every where in Conversation, as Persons who endeavour'd to fix the Charge of *Arianism* on the *Non-Subscribing Ministers*.

BUT we were more griev'd to find that our Brethren themselves, had taken *such other Steps*, and publish'd *such Accounts* to the World, as encreas'd the *Suspicion* which their *not subscribing* had rais'd in the Minds of many serious and judicious Christians. And after the publishing of the *REPLIES* by their *Committee*, we could not possibly help being afraid, either that our Brethren really differ'd from us, in *their Sense* of the *DOCTRINE* of the *TRINITY*, or of the *Importance* of it; or that they suffered themselves to be directed and govern'd by *those who did*.

IT is true, they have *professed* an *AGREEMENT* with the *Subscribing Ministers*. But that *Profession* is clouded with *such Ambiguity*, which Persons who are *not conscious of unacceptable Sentiments* should be asham'd of; and attended with *such other Circumstances and Expressions*, as do rather increase than remove the *Diffidence* caus'd by our late Divisions.

IT is therefore proper the *Non-Subscribers* should know, that if we are *mistaken* (and we should rejoice to find that we are *so*) in apprehending that the Controversy *between us* immediately affects the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity itself*; they have led us into that *Mistake* by more *explicite Declarations*

Declarations of their own, than any they have yet vouchsaf'd *publickly* to make, in favour of the *common Faith* of the Reform'd Churches.

AND if they are *indeed* agreed with us in their Sentiments, it ought to be lookt upon as a piece of *Justice* done to our *Brethren*, and to the *Truth*; to detect that *Mis-representation* which the REPLIES of their *Committee* have given to the World of the *Principles* of the *Non-Subscribing Ministers*: Whom it will concern to vindicate *themselves*, and their real *Belief*, from such *Mis-representations*.

IN the mean Time, it will appear to impartial Judges, that it is not *Humor*, as some have invidiously suggested, nor any *other Motive*, than a necessary Concern for the most important Truths of our Religion, that has engaged the *Subscribers* to set their Shoulders against that Torrent of impious Doctrines, which, in our unhappy Times, threaten to subvert all that remains of true Christianity among us.

IN this *Contest*, which is not less glorious, nor less needful, than what our *Fathers* manag'd, by the divine Assistance, against the Champions of *Rome*, we doubt not but we have the sincere and ardent *Prayers* of all those Christians, who worship *but one only God*, the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*.

THE following *Considerations* take their Rise from the *professed AGREEMENT* of the *Non-Subscribing Ministers* with the *Subscribers*, in

their *Sentiments* concerning the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*. To which I shall subjoin a distinct Answer to what is alleged to support the Charge of *Imposition* exhibited against the latter.

IN the first part of the *Reply* to our *VINDICATION*, *Pag. 6.* We are told by the *Gentlemen* of the *Committee*, ' *They* [the *Subscribers*] ' *should have done us* [Non-Subscribers] *the Justice* ' *to give out every where to their Friends, and to the* ' *World such an Account as this, that they had taken* ' *the Liberty to subscribe certain Human Explica-* ' *tions of the Doctrine of the TRINITY, which,* ' *speaking their Sense, they thought they had a Right* ' *to do; and that others of their Brethren, had made* ' *use of their Liberty to declare, they would only* ' *subscribe the Words of Scripture as a Test or* ' *WITNESS of their Faith; but that in their Sen-* ' *timents concerning the Doctrine of the TRINITY,* ' *there was a profess'd Agreement. Thus much we* ' *did profess, and this we do profess; and therefore in-* ' *sist upon it, as our Brethren will answer it to their* ' *and our common LORD, that they do not insinuate* ' *any thing to the contrary, or encourage any such In-* ' *sinuations against us. And we hope that after so* ' *free and open a Declaration as this, none will esteem* ' *the Books publish'd to state and defend the Doc-* ' *trine of the Trinity, as being writ against us,* ' *any more than against the Subscribers them-* ' *selves* '.

WHAT

WHAT the *Subscribers* took the *Liberty* to do, they have already declared to the World, in Words, at least, as well chosen, as these the *Committee* would put into their Mouths. My Design at present is, to consider what our *Brethren* tell us, (for I shall presume to use that Stile, because I take upon me to speak in the Name of *others*) we ought to have done in Reference to *themselves*.

AND First, it seems, *We should have done them the Justice to give out everywhere to our Friends, and to the World, that they had made use of their Liberty to declare, they would only subscribe the Words of Scripture, as a TEST or WITNESS of their Faith.*

I have not charg'd my Memory with what they might declare of this Nature, in our *Assembly*; but unless there be a *Fallacy* here, we could not give the *Account* insisted on without *clashing* with our *Brethren*: and being thought to intend it as a *Reflection* on their *Conduct*.

For 1. This is not agreeable to their own *Account* of Matters of Fact. In their *REPLY*, Part. 2. Pag. 37. They tell *their Friends*, and the *World*, That '*many* [of them] *expressly signify'd* '*their Readiness to come to a Declaration, when they* '*had gone through the Advices*'. And Pag. 38. '*If our Brethren had unanimously and immediately* '*concurred with us in the Advices, we had certainly* '*come into a Declaration of our Belief of the Doctrine of the Trinity; and perhaps to our mutual Satisfaction too*'. And Pag. 39. They conclude

a Paragraph thus, ‘ *And as none, that we know, absolutely refus’d a Declaration, so many all along profess’d a Design of making one*. Now, if this be a true Representation of Things, how could we, in *Justice* to our Brethren, give out every where, that they had made use of their Liberty to declare, they would only subscribe the *Words of Scripture*, &c? For one would think, this *Readiness* which many signify’d to come to a Declaration, and other Expressions importing a form’d Resolution to come into such a Declaration of their Belief of the Doctrine of the Trinity, as would perhaps be to our mutual Satisfaction, had we but concurr’d in the *Advices*; must signify more than a bare subscribing the *Words of Scripture* relating to that Doctrine. If they do not, all this *Shew* of a Readiness to come to a Declaration of their Faith, is mere *Mockery*. If more is implied in these Protestations than subscribing the *Words of Scripture* only, we could not inform the World, that our Brethren declar’d they would only subscribe the *Words of Scripture*, as a *Witness* of their Faith, without contradicting their own *Accounts of Fact*. And seeing the *Gentlemen of the Committee* seem not to agree with themselves, what it was they took the Liberty to declare, giving out in the first part of their Reply, that they declar’d they would only subscribe the *Words of Scripture*, as a *Test or Witness* of their Faith; and in the second Part, that they signify’d a *Readiness to come to a Declaration*, when they had finish’d their *Advices*, (tho’ it seems some openly protested against any Declaration of their Faith, for such Reasons as would have induc’d them, under those

those Circumstances, to protest against reading the 119th Psalm. †) The Subscribing Ministers may be allowed to be silent on this Head, without failing in Justice towards their Brethren.

2. WE could not give the Account they desire, without being thought to intend it as a Reflection on their Conduct. For if they did indeed declare they would only subscribe the Words of Scripture, as a Test, or Witness of their Faith, and if they declar'd this out of Principle, not out of Humor, it is plain that they chang'd their Principle, or forgot their Resolution, when they accompanied their Advices to EXETER with a Declaration of their Faith in other than Scripture-Terms. Will they say they did not subscribe that Declaration? The World will be apt to say, This is a mean Subterfuge. The Moderator sign'd it in their Name, and by their Appointment. And what he did under that Character is presum'd to be done by his Constituents. Otherwise, the Declaration is not theirs who made it, but the Moderator's. Will they alledge it was not design'd as a Test or Witness of their Faith? Then it was a perfect Amusement. But it happens that they frequently call it a Declaration of their own Faith; which what is it but a Test or Witness of what they believe? If we lay this together, I think our Brethren have no great Reason to insist upon it, That we should have done them the Justice to give out every where, that

they had made use of their Liberty to declare one Thing, and to act the contrary.

BUT, *Secondly*, What they seem to insist upon with the greatest Concern (and is the main Thing I intend to consider) is this, That we should give out every where to our Friends, and to the World, *That in their Sentiments concerning the DOCTRINE of the TRINITY, there was a profess'd Agreement.* Here indeed they have stop't short in their Reply; and have not expressly told us *with whom.* But I take it for granted, they would be understood to mean, *with the Subscribing Ministers.* They add, *Thus much we did profess.* And it may be so, for I shall not dispute what pass'd in the *Assembly.* Tho' if I rightly remember, when, upon some Persons professing, that *they were for the Doctrine of the Trinity, as much as those who propos'd a Declaration, That very Profession was modestly urg'd as an Argument to persuade them to come to an explicate Declaration of their Faith, since we could not but hope, they meant the DOCTRINE of the TRINITY as commonly believed and taught in the Churches of Christ, in Opposition to the New Scheme, and all other Doctrines contrary to the Catholick Sense; the Opportunity offer'd to them, by such Hints, to explain themselves was dropt, by those who were loudest in such general and ambiguous Professions.* But I desire not to lay any stress on what I remember of the Circumstances of those Transactions. It suffices that such Professions are now made, and repeated in a more publick Way

Way. And since it may be presum'd these Declarations are intended to *satisfy others*, it may be also presum'd the *Reverend Gentlemen* concern'd, will not take it amiss that one of their Brethren does in a humble and respectful Manner, offer *such Remarks* as may be improv'd towards the clearing of *some Doubts*, occasion'd by *other Declarations* as publickly made in the Course of our *Differences*; and which do greatly obstruct that intire Satisfaction the *Subscribing Ministers*, and many *OTHERS*, whom, to use their own Words, *it may concern them to regard*, would, otherwise, take in the *profess'd Agreement*. There is nothing I can more freely declare, than that I should greatly rejoice in a *real Agreement*: Nor do I know any of my Brethren who do not ardently wish for it. But when the *NON-SUBSCRIBERS* insist upon it, as we will answer it to their and our common *LORD*, that we do not insinuate any Thing to the contrary; and that in such a Stile as plainly imports an *Accusation* against us, of injuriously encouraging such *Insinuations* to their Disadvantage; we have a Right to examine, whether the *positive and publick Evidences of Agreement* are such, as will support *that Demand*; and over-balance all the *Grounds of Suspicion* that have been publickly given of a *real Difference* between the *Subscribers*, and *Non-Subscribers*, in their Sentiments concerning the *SCRIPTURE-EVIDENCE*, and *IMPORTANCE* of the *commonly receiv'd Doctrine of the Trinity*, to which the *Subscribers* are known to adhere.

THIS is what I propose to do, in the following Remarks. Taking notice, as I proceed, of what there may appear of *Argument* in the Passages refer'd to.

THE first Thing I am to do is, to consider *what Professions of Agreement* have been yet publicly made, and whether they do not want *other Declarations* to fix their Sense. And,

I. *First*, May we not in this *Inquisitive Age*, without giving Offence ; ask, *Who they are that profess their Agreement with us ?* The Papers in which *such Declarations* are made, are indeed publish'd by a *Committee of the Non-Subscribing Ministers*. But as very few know, (I am sure I do not) who are the *Members* of that *Committee*, so it remains a Question ; I. Whether they all consented to *those Passages* in which the Agreement is profess'd ? For in *Commissions* of this Nature, Things pass according to a *Vote* of the *Majority* then present. And any *Individual* may signify his *Agreement* that a Paper be publish'd without approving of every Proposition contain'd in it, or without any *publick Protest* against what he may dislike.

2. IT is equally *uncertain* whether the *Members* of this *deputed Body* declare for *themselves only* ; or have a plenipotent Power lodg'd in them by their *Constituents*, to take any proper Opportunity to let the World know, that they, the *Non-Subscribers*,

scribers are, to a Man, agreed with the *Subscribers* in their *Sentiments* about the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*? These Things are the more *questionable*, if (as I have been told,) in an Attempt towards an *Accommodation*, the *Non-Subscribers* refus'd to sign some *Concessions* taken out of the *Replies* of their *Committee*.

II. *Secondly*, If we examine the Passages themselves in which the *Declarations* of Agreement are made, we shall find that they give but a very *uncertain Sound*.

THEY are these that follow. REPLY, *Part. 2. Pag. 19.* They say, 'Both Sides have expressly declar'd themselves TRINITARIANS; and it does not appear to us, that there is a Man otherwise minded'. But what is this to the Purpose? May not Dr. Clark, and every Man who is gone into the *New Scheme*, say the same Thing? They all profess to believe a *Trinity* of divine Persons, one *Supreme*, and two *Subordinate*. And none are more ready to declare against *Sabellianism* than they. But if by *Trinitarians* our Brethren mean, such as hold a *Trinity* of divine Persons in the *Unity* of the same GODHEAD, of one *Substance*, *Power* and *Eternity*, then it does not appear that both Sides have declar'd themselves *Trinitarians*. Let this be made out, and there is an End of the Controversy, as far as it relates to the *Truth* of the *Doctrine*. But it is too apparent that the *Non-Subscribers* have refus'd such a Declaration. Nor have they, as a Body, declared

any thing yet, that is *equivalent* to it. If they have, let it be produc'd.

They say, *Pag. 75.* ' *As the World has been more than once truly told on our Part, that we had no Dispute with our Brethren about the Matter of their Declaration,—— So we must declare, and have Reason to hope the World will agree with us in it, that we are not concern'd in any Thing they advance, with Relation either to the Truth or Importance of the Doctrine itself.*' But the first Part of this Passage is only a Declaration of *Fact*, and not of Agreement in the *same Principles*. 'Tis true, they *did not* dispute with us about the Matter of our Declaration; but is there no possible or probable Reason may be assign'd for that, besides *real Agreement*? Do they not put us in mind of one, when they say, *Pag. 10.* That ' *Persons conscious of unacceptable Sentiments are usually upon the reserve.*' As for what they add of their NOT BEING CONCERN'D in any Thing we advance, with Relation either to the Truth, or Importance of the Doctrine itself; we shall know what to make of it when they farther explain themselves. We may truly say on our part, That such ambiguous Declarations do work in us a very great Concern; since it might be as soon said, were they so minded, We firmly believe the Article and Answers subscrib'd by our Brethren, to be, as to Matter of them, the DOCTRINE of the Blessed TRINITY, reveal'd in the Holy Scriptures.

IF it be urg'd, that nothing can be more full, than the Passage already quoted out of the first Part of the Reply, *Pag. 6.* where it is said, *That*
in

in their Sentiments concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity, there was a profess'd Agreement ; with the Addition of thus much we did profess, and this we do profess. I answer, That as it is not expressly specify'd with whom there was this profess'd Agreement, so it is still Matter of Conjecture only, how far the profess'd Agreement reaches, whether it relates only to the express Words of Scripture concerning that Doctrine, (and so far the New Methodists may profess an Agreement. Or whether it imports an Agreement in our Sentiments of the Sense of those Words, and of the Truth and Importance of those Consequences from them, that are express'd in our Declaration: Which does not appear from any Thing our Brethren have yet declar'd.

THE Words that seem most to import an Agreement, are those of the Committee, in the 2d Part of their Reply, Pag. 28. ' *As we know no Distinction between proper Divinity, and proper Deity, so we reckon the Words proper Divinity very explicate, as they are design'd to exclude every figurative and improper Sense; and to represent in the Apostle's Distinction, one WHO IS BY NATURE GOD.* To which they add in the next Words, ' *We always thought the Deity of the Holy Ghost, and Unity of the Three Persons, was understood by the Doctrine of the blessed Trinity; tho' we thought the present State of the Controversy especially called us to mention the proper Divinity of Christ.*

BUT

BUT even here it may be observ'd, 1. That this is only a *Comment* which the *Committee* put upon their Declaration of Faith in the *Letter to Exeter*. Whereas *most* of those whose Declaration that was, might understand the Words *proper Divinity* as Mr. *Emlyn*, and *others* do, for a Divinity that is *proper* to Christ, and *belongs not* to the other Persons. Nor does it evidently appear, that by the DOCTRINE of the BLESSED TRINITY, they understood either the *true, eternal Deity of the Holy Ghost*, or the *natural and essential Unity* of the three Persons; it being certain that these Words the *Doctrine of the blessed Trinity* are in the *present State* of the Controversy, understood by many in a *Sense different* from the Catholick Faith.

2. Even this *Comment* is not Satisfactory, nor declarative of a real Agreement with the *Subscribers*. For tho' we are told by *some* or *other* nameless Persons, that they reckon the Words *proper Divinity* very explicite, as they are design'd to exclude every *figurative* and *improper* Sense, &c. Yet, as we know not that they *were* so design'd by the *Body* of the *Non-Subscribers*; it is still a Query, *what* even the *Gentlemen* of the *Committee* mean by every *figurative* and *improper* Sense, which these Words exclude; and *what* they mean by the *Apostle's* Distinction, and by the *Unity* of the three Persons: For in the *present State of the Controversy* these Expressions are very differently understood and applied. The *Fautors* of the *New Scheme* allege, that they believe Jesus Christ is *truly* and
properly

properly GOD; truly and really GOD, and LORD; our GOD, and our LORD by Appointment of the Father; or, as he has in Subordination to, and by Communication from the Father, a true and real, not a figurative, improper, or feign'd Dominion over us. * Nor will they scruple to own, that he is by Nature truly God; taking the Word *θεός* in a Political Sense; as in the true State of Things he has receiv'd from the Father, a Nature capable of, and endued with divine, (that is invifible) Authority or Dominion over Man; in Subordination to him who alone is Supreme. Now, our Brethren have not told us, that, in the Apostle's Distinction, by one who is by Nature God, they mean one who by his real essential Nature, and Attributes is necessarily GOD, Supreme, Eternal, Independent: One whose divine Dominion depends not upon the Will and Power of any other superior Being or God, but results from his own Nature and Attributes, and the unchangeable Nature and Respects of Things.

So that, for any Thing appears by this Commitment of the Committee on their Declaration of Faith, by proper Deity they might mean a Divinity peculiar to Jesus Christ, and not common to the Three Persons. And by one who is by Nature God, they might intend a God who has a Being in Nature, or one who has a Nature capable of, and endued with actual Dominion or Authority over us. Thus, upon Dr. Clark's Principles, Kings and

* See Mr. Whiston's 4th Article of Fundamentals; and Dr. Clark's Commentary on Gal. IV. 8. Pag. 76. to 81.

Magistrates are Gods by Nature, they are really and truly so, as in the true State and Reason of Things they have a real and true Dominion; or Natures capable of, and endued with just and lawful Authority. And Angels may, in a higher Capacity, be Gods by Nature, as their Natures are capable of a more extensive, and even of invisible (which he confounds with Divine) Dominion.

THERE is also a Moral and Political Oneness, or Unity of the Three Persons, own'd by those who deny an Unity of Nature, Substance or Essence; and a subordinate Deity of the Holy Ghost. So that tho' we are inform'd by the Committee, what they always thought was [commonly] understood by the DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY, yet this Passage does not inform us what they understand, and what they think ought to be understood, by it: Or, whether they do not regard the common Notion as a vulgar Error.

THERE is another Passage, Reply, 2d Part. Pag. 20. wherein they say, 'We agree in declaring ' against Anti-trinitarians, Arians, and Socinians'. And will not Mr. Whiston or Dr. Clark do the same? The former shews a Displeasure at being rank'd in the Arian Class; and professes that he is not satisfy'd to Baptize a Socinian. † And Doctor Clark says expressly, that ' Tritheism, Sabellianism, Arianism, and Socinianism, have, to the great Disparagement of Christianity, puzzl'd the ' plain and practical Doctrine of Scripture, with

† Letter to Dr. Humphreys; St. Paul's-Day, 1718-19.

' *endless speculative Disputes. And that the Design of*
' *his Book, is to show how this Evil may be prevented,*
' *and in what Manner these Extremes may rationally*
' *be avoided*'. * So that one would think he intended to combat all the *Heresies* that were ever broach'd against the *common Faith* of Christians. It is ambiguous who are meant by *Anti-trinitarians*. The *New Methodists* will disclaim that Character. And if it refers to *Sabellianism*, they are willing to condemn *that* as a *Heresie* that tears to pieces the whole Scheme of Christian Religion.

THESE are the Principal Passages in the *Replies* that relate to *Agreement*. And let the *World* (to which our Brethren are pleas'd often to appeal) judge, whether, considering the *present State* of the Controversy, we have any great Reason to be satisfy'd with them.

IF we are refer'd to the *Declaration of Faith*, (as it is call'd) in the *Letter to Exeter*, † (which is the only *publick Testimony* the *Non-Subscribers* have, as a Body, given of *what they believe*, concerning the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*;) it will leave us as much as ever in the *Dark*, concerning their *real Sentiments*. For, tho' our Brethren sign'd it

* *Introduc't. to the Scripture Doctr. Pag. 27, 28.* † *Authentic Account, Pag. 15.* ' We freely declare, That we utterly disown the *Arian Doctrine*, and sincerely believe the *Doctrine* of the *Blessed Trinity*, and the *proper Divinity* of our Lord Jesus Christ, which we apprehend to be clearly revealed in the holy Scriptures, but are far from condemning any who appear to be with us in the *Main*, tho' they should chuse not to declare themselves in other than Scripture-Terms, or not in ours'.

only by their *Moderator*, it contains no more than any of those who are gone into the *New Scheme* are ready to declare.

THIS our Brethren have been already told, in a *VINDICATION* of the *Subscribing-Ministers*. And their *Answer* to that Exception is not very Satisfactory. They tell us (*Reply, Part. 2d Pag. 27.*) ‘ If (as is farther alleged) our Declaration ‘ contains no more than those who are gone into ‘ the *New Scheme* might Sign; that Fault it has ‘ in common with the *Scriptures*, and no more just ‘ Exception to the one, than to the other. But if by ‘ the *New Scheme* so often mention’d, and never ‘ once explain’d, is meant *Arianism*; to condemn ‘ and prevent the growth of which, was the only Reason offer’d in our Debates, for making a Declaration; we think, it does contain more than an ‘ *Arian* can honestly Sign. Can an *Arian* freely declare, That he utterly renounces the *Arian Doctrine*.’

TO which I answer, 1. They cannot but know that by *Arianism* in our Debates, we did not mean all the *Peculiarities* of *Arius*, but particularly refer’d to *Dr. Clark’s Scheme*; which we apprehend agrees in the Main with the ancient *Heresy*, condemn’d under the Name of *Arianism*. And if they are not yet satisfy’d what that Scheme is, we must refer them to *Dr. Clark* himself, who renounces *Arianism*, and no doubt thinks he does it honestly.

2. BY the *Arian Doctrine*, which is renounc’d in this Declaration, the *Non-Subscribers* mean the *New Scheme* (of which we cannot suppose them ignorant,

ignorant, whatever they may pretend) or they do not. If they do not, it is plain they have not yet renounc'd *that Scheme*. If they do, what Reason can be assign'd why they have express'd themselves in such Words, as those who espouse *that Scheme* are known to agree to? They tell us their Declaration contains more than an Arian can honestly Sign. Now, if this was a *design'd Thing*, and not merely *accidental*, the same Reason that mov'd them to *such a Declaration* as no Arian can honestly Sign, should have induc'd them to make *such a Declaration* of their Faith, as no New Methodist could honestly Sign, if they intended to condemn that Method or Scheme, under the Arian Doctrine. Did they not declare themselves in Words which no Arian can honestly Sign, to distinguish themselves from Arians, and as an Evidence that they look upon the Arian Doctrine to be a Corruption, or Denial of the Christian Faith? If they have the like Thoughts of the new Doctrines advanc'd by Dr. Clark, and others, why did not the same Reasons influence them to repudiate these, and to make *such a Declaration*, as the Maintainers and Favourers of those Errors could not come into?

3. THEY deny not (nor can deny) what is alleged, That their Declaration contains no more than those who are gone into the New Scheme might Sign, (by which it would seem that they look upon *that* and *Arianism* to be quite different Things, and that they did not think themselves equally concern'd to renounce the one as the other : Or, at least, that they thought *Arianism* was the

most obnoxious Word.) But they say, ‘ *That Fault it has in common with the Scriptures, and no more just Exception* (I suppose it should be, and ‘ *is no more a just Exception*) *to the ONE, than to the OTHER.*’ How friendly soever this may be to the *New Scheme*, the Expression is very loose and unguarded. It is no *Exception* against the Scriptures; that some Men *wrest them to their own Destruction.* And tho’ an *Heretick* may subscribe the same *Scripture Words* with a true Believer, yet if our Brethren think that such as are gone into the *New Scheme*, may, upon their own Principles, take the *Scripture Expressions* relating to the *Trinity*, in their *true and genuine Sense*, they cannot but suppose that *Scheme* to be *right.* And upon that Supposition they had a good Reason not to declare against it. But tho’ it be no *Fault* in the *Scriptures* that they are liable to be *perverted* by Men of *corrupt Minds*, who often *cover* their Errors, and amuse the *Weak* and *Ignorant* with a *clamorous Pretence* that they are for the *Words of Scripture*; (which was exactly the *Guise* of the old *Arians*, who, when any Thing was urg’d as the *Sense of Scripture*, or as a *necessary* Consequence from it, had recourse to this Subterfuge, ἀλλ’ ἡ γέγραπται ταῦτα, *but these Things are not written.*) It is, nevertheless, a *just Exception* against their Declaration, which is not *Scripture*; nor contains the *genuine Sense* of any one *Text* of *Scripture*; and which was design’d as a publick *Testimony* of their *Belief* concerning the *Doctrine of the Trinity*; that those who *deny* or *corrupt* that

Doctrine

PROFESS'D AGREEMENT, &c. 261

Doctrine (if they will allow the *New Methodists* to deserve that Censure,) can shroud themselves, and their *Opinions* under it. This, however, must be granted, that *such* a Declaration is as much an *Evidence* of *Agreement* with the *Followers* of *Dr. Clark*, as with the *Subscribing Ministers*.



CHAP.



C H A P. II.

The profess'd Agreement farther consider'd. Shew'd, That if the Non-Subscribers believe and understand their own express Words, or the Words of their Committee, in the most obvious and most common Sense of these Words, they must, to be consistent with themselves, differ from the Subscribers, in their Sentiments concerning the SCRIPTURE-EVIDENCE, or the TRUTH and CERTAINTY of the Catholick Doctrine of the TRINITY, as stated in the first Article of the CHURCH of ENGLAND, and fifth and sixth ANSWERS of the ASSEMBLIES CATECHISM. Of HUMAN DECISIONS; and assuming Authority in Matters of Faith.

TH E next Thing I am to do, is, to enquire, whether the *Non-Subscribers* or their Committee, have not by as express Declarations, as any have yet appear'd on their Side, given just Cause

Cause to doubt, whether *they* are indeed agreed with the *Subscribers* in their *Sentiments* concerning the SCRIPTURE-EVIDENCE, and IMPORTANCE of the *generally receiv'd Doctrine* of the TRINITY?

WE have examin'd their *Concessions* in favour of *that Doctrine*; and find they fall *short* of what might be expected from Persons who vehemently *profess an Agreement*. But these *Deficiencies*, however unaccountable, would have been overlook'd by me, if they had not advanc'd such *Positions* concerning our *Declaration* and *Subscription*, as must, I think, in the Judgment of all, who regard the most obvious and necessary *Consequences* of what is said, infer a real *Difference* in our *Sentiments* concerning the *Sense* of *Scripture*, and the *Stress* that ought to be laid on the *Catholick Doctrine*.

AND First, They have said *such Things*, as appear to me to be *inconsistent* with *their agreeing* with the *Subscribers*, in their *Sentiments* concerning the *Scripture-Evidence*, or the *Truth* and *Certainty* of the *generally receiv'd Doctrine* of the TRINITY.

I need not explain what I mean by this *Doctrine*. I have oftner than once observ'd, That in stating *Articles of Faith*, necessary to be believed by Christians, we ought to *distinguish* between the *Article itself*, and the different *Ways* of illustrating and proving the same *Doctrinal Point*. The *Sum* of the *Catholick Doctrine* of the *Trinity*,

nity, as *anciently* and *now* receiv'd in the Churches of Christ, (excepting a few *Sectaries*) is *truly* and *fully* represented in the *first Article* of the *Church of England*, and in the *fifth* and *sixth* Answers of the *Assemblies Catechism*. What is express'd in these Propositions, the *Subscribers* believe to be the Doctrine of the *Blessed Trinity*, reveal'd in the *Holy Scriptures*: And which has always been profess'd and preserv'd in the *Catholick Church*, in Spite of the Opposition made unto it, in several Ages, by the *Emissaries of Satan*; whose Hatred of the *Truth* has not, in any Instance, discover'd itself more, than in his Attempts to corrupt this Doctrine. If the *Non-Subscribers* are *otherwise* minded, or have any Exception against these Propositions, or doubt whether *the Sense* of the *HOLY GHOST* be *truly* express'd in them, without Mixture of any thing contrary *thereto*; how *just*, or *unjust* soever their Thoughts may be, or whether they think it proper to *publish* or *conceal* what they believe, or do not believe, concerning these Propositions; this must be granted on all Hands, that they are not agreed with the *Subscribers* in their Sentiments concerning this Doctrine.

BUT to proceed in the *first Part* of our Enquiry.

AND here I shall not insist much on their *Refusal* to subscribe our Declaration. Tho' if they had no *Objection*, in their own Minds, against any Thing contain'd in it, even *that* seems unaccountable. Is it *unlawful* to *Sign* what we believe

lieve to be a Truth of God? May it not be sometimes *expedient* to do it? Did not our Brethren *subscribe* their *Advices*, tho' mere *Human*, and, I dare venture to say, in some Instances, *imperfect* *Composures*? And if they were more *shy* as to the Declaration of *their own Faith*, yet did they not appoint their *Moderator*, or *Proxy*, to Sign it in their Name? Might they not have chosen the *Article* and *Answers* subscrib'd by us, as a *Witness* of what they *themselves* believ'd, without making them a *Test* of *Orthodoxy* for others; and with an *express Provision* in favour of *such* as appear to be with them *in the Main*? Was this *impossible* or *unlawful* to be done? What could render it so, if they were indeed *agreed* with the *Subscribers*, that these Forms contain the Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, revealed in the *Holy Scriptures*? After all the other *REASONS* given for not *Subscribing*, do not *these* seem the *most natural*; either that they did not believe with the *Subscribers*; or that they were unwilling to *distinguish* themselves from *those* who believ'd *otherwise*? If this *last Reason* had no place in their Thoughts, why did they not expressly declare against the *New Scheme*? If it was a *Motive* with them, if they were unwilling to *distinguish* as above, why did they *renounce* the *Arian Doctrine*?

BUT what I intend chiefly to argue from under this *Head*, is the *Character* they have, without any qualifying Clause, stamp'd on our Declaration of *Faith*; perhaps to recommend it to the Acceptation of all Christians as a *Form of sound*

*Words, that truly express the Sense of the HOLY GHOST. They have indeed loaded it with several Epithets, that begin with unscriptural, or human. But I shall fix upon that of a HUMAN DECISION. So they term it in the Postscript to the Reasons for not Subscribing *. And in the Reply, Part 2d. Pag. 75. where they defend that Postscript, they tell us, ' If we had all submitted (for so they are pleas'd to word it, tho' ' no Submission was requir'd) to such a Subscription (as was propos'd) — the natural Tendency of ' our having done so, would have been a transferring ' our Faith from the Word of God, (upon which ' alone it ought to be built) to found it upon HUMAN ' Explications and DECISIONS'. So that in their Judgment, the DECLARATION subscrib'd by us, is a Human Decision in Contradistinction to the Word of God. And if by the Word of God they mean the Scriptures, they must, to be consistent with themselves, look upon it as a Human Decision in Contradistinction to the Sense of Scripture, which they say, is Scripture. Their Words are, ' No doubt the Sense of Scripture, and not the sound ' of Words is Scripture.† But that we might not be at a loss to know what they mean by Human Decisions, they tell us ' for once, That they mean all ' Determinations of Men in MATTERS of Salvation'. * * It is plain then they mean Decisions of Things or Doctrines, and not Decisions about Letters, Syllables, Phrases and Disposition of Words without Consideration of the MATTER signify'd by*

** Authentick Account, Pag. ult.
Pag. 18.*

** * Part 2d, Pag. 15.*

† Reply, Part. I.

by them. They mean *all Determinations of Men in MATTERS of Salvation*, as *these are distinguish'd from the Determinations of God's Word in MATTERS of Salvation*: Or, *some Things which are not determin'd and decided by the Holy Ghost in Scripture*: And concerning which we have no *Security* that they are the *certain Truths* of God; or in which *there may be Uncertainty and Error*, as well as *Security and Truth* †. Thus in their Reply, Part I. Pag. 13. Speaking of our Subscription, they say, 'As if to keep strictly to the Word of God' WHICH we ARE SURE is Truth, would not 'prove us Lovers of Truth, without adding the' EXPLICATIONS OF FALLIBLE MEN'. If there is any Sense in these Words, they must signify, that they are not sure our Declaration is a *Divine Truth*.

By this Time the Reader cannot but apprehend how Matters stand *between us*. The Subscribers believe that *what is express'd in the Article and Answers sign'd by them, is the very Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, revealed in the Holy Scriptures*. They believe with the Reverend Dr. Calamy, That GOD, who best knows Himself, HATH TOLD US, *there are three that equally possess all divine Perfections, and yet but ONE GOD*. * This is the Substance of our Declaration; and GOD having told us this, or revealed it in his Word, we cannot but regard it as an *Article of*

† Occasional Paper, Vol. 3. Numb. ii. Pag. 22. &c. * Dr. Calamy, of Inspiration, Pag. 212.

Faith, DETERMINED by the *Scriptures*. And can the *Non-Subscribers* believe *this*, and yet believe at the same Time, that our Declaration is but a *Human Decifion*? If our Brethren think that tho' it be a MATTER *decided* and *determin'd* by the *Scriptures* themselves, it is, nevertheless, a *Human Decifion*, let them speak out. But let them not blame us if we think this is a *Contradiction*, and must think so, whilst we believe that the *Scriptures* are the *Word of God*, and not the *Invention of Man*.

HAD they told us, that by *Human Decifions*, they meant no more than *Decifions* about *Words* or *Sounds*, without any *Regard* to their *Sense* and *Meaning*; we should not think it worth while to contend with them about *Nothing*. But when they tell us, that by *Human Decifions*, they mean all *Determinations of Men in MATTERS of Salvation*; and then exprefly call our DECLARATION a *human Decifion*, in *Contradistinction* to the *Word of God*, which they are sure is *Truth*, telling us also, that *doubtless* the *Sense of Scripture* and not the *Sound of Words* is *Scripture*; We cannot possibly *not* conclude, either that they do not *understand* or *believe* themselves, or, that they are *not agreed* with us in their *Sentiments* concerning the *Scripture Evidence* and *Truth* of our Declaration, which we believe to be the *Doctrine* of the *Blessed Trinity* revealed in the *Holy Scriptures*.

Object. 1. BUT the *Words* are *Human*.

AND so are all *Words* originally, for ought we know. But what is this to the Purpose?

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Was it ever known that Men contended about *Words*, who were agreed in the *Things* signify'd by them? We have no *such Strife* with any, but allow that the *same Doctrine* may be express'd in different *Forms* of Speech. *Faith* is an *inward Principle*. The *Object* of it is *Truth*, not *Sounds*. And all the use we have of *Words*, is, to declare the Conceptions of our Minds without Disguise or Prevarication. We are of Opinion, that if *human Minds* can truly apprehend *divine Truths* (and if they cannot, to what Purpose serves a *Divine Revelation*?) *These Truths* may be as truly express'd in *Human Words*, as in *Scripture-Phrase*. And our Brethren tell us, that ' *what-
ever Words truly express the Sense of the Holy Ghost,
they readily allow to carry in them a Doctrine of di-
vine Inspiration, the contrary to which must be a
dangerous Error*'. † Will they grant this of our *Declaration*? If not, what is become of the *profess'd Agreement*? But if they will indeed allow that it *truly expresses* the *Sense* of the *Holy Ghost*; that is, the *Sense* of *Scripture*, which, they say, *is Scripture*, with what Consistency can they call it a *human Decision*? Can they believe *that* to be a *human Decision*, which they believe to be a *Doctrine of divine Inspiration*?

We are willing to put the Controversy upon this very Foot. Let them produce their Arguments to prove that the *Matter* of our Declaration (for we have a Right to keep them to *that*

† Reply, Part I. Pag. 24.

Point, since we declare to all the World, that we will never dispute about *mere Sounds*, or the *Order* and *Disposition* of certain *Words*, scriptural or not scriptural, *abstracted* from their *Meaning* and *Import.*) Let them prove, I say, that the *Matter* of our *Declaration* is purely a *Human Decision*, that is, that the *Scriptures themselves* have not *determin'd* and *decided* this *Matter*, as it is *stated* in the *Article* and *Answers* to which we have set our *Hands*; and we shall not only think ourselves oblig'd to give them a fair *Hearing*, but to *retract* what we are not able to defend, without having recourse to mere *human Authorities*, or *Decisions*.

BUT we cannot receive *apparent Contradictions*. We cannot regard *that* as a *human Decision*, which we believe to be the *Scripture Doctrine* of the *Trinity*. And we find it a difficult *Matter* to persuade ourselves, we are agreed in our *Sentiments* with *those*, who rank among the *Determinations of fallible Men*, what we believe to be the *very Sense* of the HOLY GHOST in a *Matter of Revelation*. We are told, that we are for *setting up our Declaration in the place of Scripture*.† But this is too wide a *Feint* to impose upon any who does not wink hard. We own, we assert, and, by the divine *Assistance*, are ready to maintain, (and some of us have maintain'd) that what they call our *Explication*, is the *Explication* given of the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, by the *Inspir'd Pen*-

† *Reply, Part. 2, Pag. 75.*

Men of *Scripture*. We do not pretend that all the *Words* of our Declaration are *strictly* Canonical, or that all the *Positions* of which it consists are *Syllabically* contain'd in the *sacred Volumes*; but that the *Sense* is *divine*, that these *Words* and *Positions* signify no more than what is written in the *Old* and *New Testament*, is the Thing we contend for. And they are so good as to grant, what no Mortal ever denied, that those *Words* which truly express the *Sense* of the HOLY GHOST, do contain a *Doctrine* of *divine Inspiration*, that is, they truly express the *Sense* of the Holy Ghost. And in no other *Sense* do we put our Declaration in the place of *Scripture*.

Object. 2. BUT the *Propositions* in the *Article* and *Answers*, are only *Consequences* from *Scripture*, and these collected by *fallible Men*, therefore, they are *human Decisions* only.

Answer 1. If by *Consequences* in this *Objection* be meant *remote* *Consequences*, to which the *Mind* must be led by a *Succession* of *other Consequences*, then I deny that these *Propositions* are only *Consequences* drawn from the *Words* of *Revelation*. They express the *natural* and *necessary Meaning* of those innumerable *Texts* of *Scripture* that relate to this *Matter*, consider'd in our *View*. 2. It is not consequent, That because they are *Deductions* from *Scripture*, therefore they are *Human Decisions* only. If they are *near* and *necessary* *Consequences* from *Scripture*, and such we hold them to be, they are *as much*, or *as TRULY* a *Manner* of *Revelation*, and so to be regarded,

as those express Declarations of Scripture, whence they *naturally* and *necessarily* flow. They are Truths of the *same kind*, of the *same original Conveyance*, and of the *same divine Authority* with their *Premises*: And that whether collected by *fallible* or *infallible Men*. For Proof of this I refer the Reader to my *Dissertation*.

I shall only add here, in reference to the present Case; that for a Man to *profess*, he believes there is but *one only the living and true God*; and that the *Characters* and *Attributes* which are peculiar to, and *distinguish* the *one only God* from every *other Being*, do indeed belong, and are in Scripture applied to *these Three*, the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*; who, nevertheless, are plainly distinguish'd from each other, by different *Personal Attributions*; (and if the *Non-Subscribers* do not believe this, *their professing* an Agreement with the *Subscribers* in their Sentiments concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity, is an *Imposition* upon Mankind :) For a Man, I say, to profess that he *thus believes*, upon the *Evidence of Scripture*, and yet to say, at the same Time, that he has not the *same Evidence*, the *same Authority*, and the *same Certainty* concerning this Consequence, That *these three are the one God*, is, in the plain Consequence of it, to proclaim to the World, either that he *does not believe*, what he *says he believes*, or that he is not capable to know or believe any Thing in a *Moral Sense*.

Object. 3. BUT is not this to put the Stamp of a *divine Authority* upon the *Interpretations* and *Conclusions* of *fallible Men*, and consequently to assert that *such* have *Authority* to *determine* Articles of Faith for *others*?

Ans. IT is no such Thing. It is only to assert that *fallible Men*, may, in some Things, *rightly* apprehend the *Mind* of GOD, or the *Sense* of his Word; and draw *just* and *lawful* Conclusions from his Declarations: And that *others* may be *obliged* to receive the Scriptures in the *same Sense*, and to be *determin'd* by *those Conclusions*; not *because* they are the *Sense* and *Conclusions* of *fallible Men*, but *because* they are *divine Truths*, which they had *Means* and *Opportunities* of discerning.

TO apply this to our *Declaration* of Faith, We firmly believe it truly expresses the *Mind* of God, or the *Sense* of his Word. This we believe *not* upon the *Authority* of those Men who put the *Article* and *Answers* into the Form in which they now lie; (on the contrary, we declare, that we should not think it *justifiable* in *ourselves* or *others*, to receive this Declaration as the *undoubted Sense* of Scripture, *merely* upon *their* Word, or *Authority*: For that would be to own them to be invested with those *Capacities* and *Powers* which were peculiar to the *Apostles*, and *inspir'd Ministers*, of CHRIST.) But this we believe upon the *Scripture-Evidence* that accompanies the *Article* and *Answers* themselves. And we think, that *others* are *obliged* to receive the *same Sense* of Scripture. Oblig'd I say, not *because* it is *our* Sense, but *be-*

cause it is the *real* and *determinate* Sense of the *Holy Ghost*, in a *necessary part* of Faith.

If it be pleaded that others may *not see* this Sense it will not, therefore, follow, that they are not *obliged* to receive it, if they had sufficient *Means* and *Opportunities* of discerning it to be the Sense of Scripture.

If it be said that others may not *understand* it I answer briefly, that this will be an *Argument*, only with those who are *void* of *Understanding*. He deserves not the *Name* of a *Christian*, who shall refuse his Assent to the *Truth* of an Article of Faith, revealed in Scripture, merely because the *Manner* of it is *incomprehensible* to what he calls his Reason.

If it be farther alledg'd, That it may appear to *others* to be *false*: I answer, That whilst they have these Apprehensions, it would be *Sin* in them to profess an Assent to it; and it would be *Sin* in others to *force* them to any *such Profession*; or to *persecute* them for their Persuasion. But the *Apprehensions* of *others*, whatever *these* Apprehensions are, whether they are real *Persuasions*, or strong *Prejudices*, or the *Delusions* of *Pride* and *Self-conceit*, can never affect that *Regard* which we are bound to have to what *we ourselves*, upon the most convincing Grounds, are fully *certify'd* and persuaded is the *Sense* of Scripture in a *necessary part* of Faith. We are still oblig'd to regard that *Sense*, not as a *human Decision*, but as an *Object* of Faith, or a *Matter* of *Revelation*. Unless we will be run into this Absurdity, that is not it the *Sense* of Scripture, but the *Sound* of Words, that is the
Mat.

Matter of our Faith. In Consequence of this, we must look upon those who reject *such Sense*, as Persons who reject *what* we are oblig'd to reverence as a *divine Truth*; and regulate our Conduct with respect to *Communion* with them, according to the Conviction we have of its *Importance* in Religion.

IN all this we claim no more *Authority* over others, in Matters of Faith, than we are willing they should claim over us; that is, none at all. We only plead for the Perfection and *Usefulness* of a divine Revelation; which is greatly obscured by those who make the *Sound* of Words, and not the *Sense*, the *Rule* and *Object* of their Faith. We only plead for those *Rights* which cannot be denied to us, without divesting us of our *Humanity*, and of our *Religion*, and of an Interest in the reveal'd Promises of God to all true Believers of the Gospel; and that is, that we may, in some Instances, be fully *certify'd* that we *rightly* apprehend the Mind of God, or the *real* and *determinate Sense* of his Word; and may regard *such Sense*, not as the *Determinations of fallible Men in Matters of Salvation*, in which there may be *Falsbood* as well as *Truth*; not as a Matter of Opinion, but as an *Article of Faith*, or a *Doctrine of divine Inspiration*.

THIS puts me in mind of the hard and forc'd Construction, which the Committee of Non-Subscribing Ministers have thought it becoming them to put upon an Expression in the VINDICATION of the Subscribers, Pag. 12.

IT is there said, 'We know not what they [the Non-Subscribers] mean by human Decisions, but

‘ *this we conclude, that Persons tho’ denying the Au-*
 ‘ *thority of Men in Matters of Faith, may yet*
 ‘ *judge some Propositions contain’d in Words of their*
 ‘ *forming, to express the Mind of GOD as truly as*
 ‘ *if delivered in Scripture Terms ; and THEN to*
 ‘ *reject such Propositions is not merely to reject a hu-*
 ‘ *man Form, but to reject DIVINE TRUTH’.*
 Who would think that there is any Contradiction
 in these Words to themselves ? Or that *That Au-*
thority which we seemed to disclaim (for so their
Charity dispos’d them to word it) is yet cunning-
 ly aim’d at with the same Breath ? Is there any
 Thing here but what is capable of the strongest
 Proof ? Our Brethren themselves deny not the
first Clause in this Passage. It is only the *Conclu-*
sion which they dislike. Their Censure is as fol-
 lows : After they venture to tell us, That by *Hu-*
man Decisions, they mean *all Determinations of Men*
in Matters of Salvation : † They immediately add,
 ‘ *Their own following Words contain a remarkable*
 ‘ *Instance of such human Decisions, and one by which*
 ‘ *we should be as loth to be determin’d, as by most that*
 ‘ *ever were made ; (surely then it must be very*
 ‘ *bad.) Because indeed we cannot but judge it to*
 ‘ *contain Matter of very dangerous Import’.* Then
 they recite the Passage, in the *Vindication*, above
 mention’d. But what if I should say that this is
 no *human Decision* at all, according to their *own*
Definition ? If by *human Decisions* they mean *all*
Determinations of Men in Matters of Salvation,

† Reply, Part 2d Pag. 14, 15.

it will, I think, be hard to prove that this is any *such Determination*. But supposing it to be what they are pleas'd to call it, where is the Harm of it? What Matter of *very dangerous Import* does it contain? Why, ' *Here the Judgment of some fallible Men, that a Proposition contain'd in certain human Words expresses the Mind of God as truly as if delivered in Scripture Terms, is made a Foundation for this Conclusion*': THEN to reject such a Proposition, is not merely to reject a human Form, but to reject divine Truth.

I answer; If they mean that the *Judgment* of fallible Men, consider'd as *their Judgment*, without Consideration of the *Reason* and *Evidence* of Things, is made the Foundation of this Conclusion, nothing could be said more false, or more invidious. For this is neither the *only*, nor the most *obvious*, nor indeed *any Sense* of the Passage; tho' they say, they could make *no other Sense* of it. For the Conclusion is manifestly founded on this Supposition, that the Proposition itself does in Reality *as truly* express the Mind of God, as if deliver'd in Scripture-Terms. The Subscribers say *three Things* in this *human Decision*, by which our Brethren it seems, are as loth to be determin'd, as by most that ever were made. They say, 1. That the Mind of God may be *as truly* express'd in the Words of Men, as if delivered in Scripture-Terms. This cannot be denied without admitting of a thousand Absurdities. 2. That a Person may conclude *so*, without owning any *Authority* of those Men whose Words they are, in Matters of Faith. This is

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confess'd by the *Non-Subscribers*. And 3. That THEN, upon Supposition these Words do *as truly* express the Mind of God, as if deliver'd in Scripture Terms, to reject them, or the *Sense* of them, is not *merely* to reject a *human Form*, but to reject *divine Truth*. And this they themselves do not deny. I should not here decline the *Decision* of an Enemy, far less of our *Brethren*, to whose *Judgment* I will *venture*, for *once*, to appeal, whether this be not the most *Grammatical*, and the most *easy* Sense of the Words in the *Vindication*? Whether the *Stress* of the *Conclusion* is not laid on the *Reality* and *Truth* of Things, and not on the *Decisions* of fallible Men, as if *their Judgment*, without regard to *Right* or *Wrong*, were sufficient to support such a Censure, that whoever agrees not with *That* must, *therefore*, reject a *divine Truth*?

BUT tho' the *Subscribers* are not for making *their own*, or the *Judgment* of other fallible Men, the *Standard* of Truth and Error to themselves, or others: Nevertheless, if any shall deny *the Truth* of a Proposition, which, upon the clearest *Evidence* of *Scripture*, they believe is *truly expressive* of the Mind of God, without mixture of Error, they cannot possibly not *conclude*, that such Persons *reject a divine Truth*. This they do indeed in *Consequence* of *their own Judgment* form'd on the *Evidence* of *Scripture*, but it is still on the *Scripture-Evidence itself*, and not on *their own Judgment*, without Consideration of *such Evidence*, that they lay the *Stress* of this Conclusion.

AND

AND thus, I think, we may conclude, without being thought to claim *that Authority* in Matters of Faith, which we expressly *disclaim*; which is the *Charge* they would fix upon us. If fallible Men may judge that a Proposition contain'd in human Words, as *truly* expresses the Mind of God, as if deliver'd in *Scripture-Terms*, (which we affirm, and they have not denied,) must not these fallible Men, in Consequence of this, conclude, That to reject *the Sense* of that Proposition, is, to reject a *divine Truth*? Can they possibly judge otherwise? Can they judge that a *Proposition*, is a *divine Truth*, and yet not conclude that to reject *that* Proposition, is to reject a *divine Truth*? Are they guilty of assuming an unlawful *Authority* in Matters of Faith, who have not such a *Superiority* over their own Minds, as to believe *otherwise* than they do really believe? Or have it not in their power to believe manifest Contradictions? Did our Brethren usurp an unwarrantable *Authority*, when in Consequence of their own *fallible* Judgment, guided as they doubtless think, by the *Reason* and *Evidence* of the Thing, they concluded that our *human Decision* contains a *Matter of very dangerous Import*?

BRIEFLY, may not fallible Men be certain, that in some Points of Faith, *they judge* according to their *infallible Rule*? Mr. Chillingworth contends for it, as a Principle without which it can never be prov'd against the *Papists*, That *the Religion of Protestants is a safe way to Salvation*. Yet he was no Advocate for the *Authority* of Men in Matters of Faith. And in *such Cases* may we not, without

out Presumption, *conclude*, that to reject what we are *sure* is the Mind of God, is to reject a *divine Truth*?

It is, I persuade myself, the Judgment of our Brethren, that *the BIBLE, the BIBLE only* is (or ought to be) *the Religion of Protestants*. And I declare it is my Judgment too, as that signifies that the Word of God, (not the *Sound*, but the *Sense* of his Word) is the only Rule of our Faith and Practice, as we are *Christians*, and *Protestants*. Now, if any Man should flatly deny the *Truth* of this Proposition, would they not *conclude* that he denied a *true Proposition*, *μενὶ λόγῳ*;

OUR Brethren cannot more firmly believe this, than the *Subscribers* believe that *Jesus Christ* is *one God* with the *Father*; or, that he *is*, in the *highest, strict, and proper Sense*, *absolutely SUPREME OVER ALL*. These Words, they believe, are *truly* expressive of the Revelation of God concerning himself, or the *Meaning* of his Word. And can they possibly believe this, but they must *conclude*, That to deny the *Truth* of these Propositions, is to deny, not *merely a human Form*, or a *human Decision* in *Matters* of Salvation, but a *divine Truth*? Is it indeed the *Judgment* of our Brethren, that to deny the *Truth* of these Propositions is not to deny a *divine Truth*; is not to deny the *Decision* of the *Holy Ghost*, tho' express'd in a *human Form*? Or, can this be *their Judgment*, if they are fully persuaded upon the clearest *Evidence* of *Scripture* that these Propositions contain a *Doctrine truly divine*, or the *true Sense* of *Scripture*? And if they are not persuaded of this, by what Rules of *human*

Converse

Converse can they justify, their *professing an Agreement* with the *Subscribing Ministers* in their Sentiments concerning this Doctrine?

THIS brings us back to what we were upon.

LET our Brethren be free and open with us, as we are with *them*, and all Mankind. Let them more fully explain what they mean by the *Doctrine of the Blessed Trinity*, and the proper Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, which they apprehend to be clearly revealed in the *Holy Scriptures* †; and what they mean by *human Decisions* as applied to our Declaration concerning that Doctrine. We have a Right to insist upon this. For if *human Decisions* and *Scripture-Decisions* are not, in their Judgment, one and the same Thing, the PROFESS'D AGREEMENT is an unintelligible Sound, or a Contradiction to *their* and *our* express Declarations. I would ask again, will they own, that the Matter of our Declaration is the same with what the *Scriptures* have decided and determin'd concerning the Trinity, that it contains nothing but what is founded on, and found in the *Scriptures* of the Old and New Testament, but that it is nevertheless a *human Decision*? Let them but explicitly own this, and at the same time assure us, that they do not hereby intend to place the *Scriptures* among the *Inventions* of Men, or to derogate from their *Divine Authority*, as given by *Inspiration of God*;

† *Authentick Account*, Pag. 14.

and we shall gladly accept even of *such* a Declaration from *their Hands*; and charitably conclude that by *human Decisions*, and their *Definition* of *human Decisions*, they meant *nothing* at all.

BUT in the mean Time, how hard is the Task that is *impos'd* upon us? We must believe, that the *Non-Subscribers* have the *same Sentiments* with the *Subscribers* concerning this Article of Faith; that is, that they believe *the Truth* of our Declaration as much as we do; that *they believe* it to be the *Doctrine* of the *Blessed Trinity* revealed in the *Holy Scriptures*, the very *Decision* of the *Holy Ghost*, or the *true Sense* of *his Words*; for so we apprehend they would be understood in the *profess'd Agreement*. This we must give out every where to our *Friends*, and to the *World*, and they insist upon it, in the manner of a solemn Charge, that we do not *insinuate any thing* to the contrary: And yet, unless we can persuade ourselves, that *they did not understand*, or well consider one of the chief *Reasons* assign'd by themselves, why they did not *Subscribe* our DECLARATION (which might be, and I am apt to think, really was, the Case with some of them.) We may as easily believe *Transubstantiation*, or any other *Contradiction*, as believe that *they are really agreed* with us, in their Sentiments concerning the *Scripture-Evidence*, or the *Truth* and *Certainty* of the generally received *Doctrine*, as stated in the *first Article* of the CHURCH of ENGLAND, and the *fifth* and *sixth* Answers of the *Assemblies Catechism*: Which we had never *Subscrib'd* as our Declaration of Faith, had we regarded them only as mere *human Decisions*.

THE

THE Case is plain. Either we must conclude that by *human Decisions*, they did not mean, what they say they meant, the *Determinations of Men in Matters of Salvation*; that they did not mean *human Decisions* in the common Sense of these Words, as oppos'd to what the Scriptures have determin'd and decided; that they meant something else, perhaps, *Scripture-Revelations*, or *Decisions* about *Sounds*, not *Things* or *Doctrines*; or that they meant nothing by these Terms; otherwise we cannot believe, or with Judgment, give out that we do believe, they are agreed with us in their Sentiments concerning the *Doctrine of the Trinity*. We are sorry for it. Our Brethren have brought us into this Strait; and they only can guide us out of it, by a more *explicite Declaration* of their own Faith, than we yet know they have made. Their own *express Words*, and not any forc'd Construction of ours upon what they have done or said, have rendered it so difficult for us to believe, what otherwise our Love to them, and to the Truth greatly inclines us still to hope, even against Hope. But how hard is it to force a real Conviction against Evidence?

CAN we look upon that as a *human Decision*, which we believe is a *Doctrine revealed in Scripture*, without looking on the *Scriptures themselves* as a *human Invention*? A *divine Decision* may, we know, be express'd in a *human Form*. And if our Brethren will freely tell us, That by the *Determinations of Men in MATTERS of Salvation*, when applied to our Declaration, they intended no more; than their *Determinations about Sounds*, or

the *Order* of certain Words, without Consideration of the *MATTER* signify'd by them, we shall be satisfy'd. 'Till then, let no Man blame us, if we apprehend we *are not* agreed in our Sentiments with those who regard as a *human Decision*, what we believe is a *Doctrine of Divine Inspiration*.





C H A P. III.

The PROFESS'D AGREEMENT consider'd as it relates to the IMPORTANCE of the DOCTRINE of the TRINITY. With Remarks on several Passages in the 2d Part of the Reply, relating to human Forms; the Sense of Scripture; and Grounds of Censure. The whole shewing that the Gentlemen of the Committee have not done Justice to themselves, and the rest of our Brethren on that Side, if they are indeed agreed with the SUBSCRIBERS in their Sentiments concerning the IMPORTANCE of the commonly receiv'd DOCTRINE of the TRINITY: Or, judge it necessary to our CHRISTIANITY, or to a CREDIBLE PROFESSION, that we should understand the Scriptures relating to that Doctrine, or any other Article of Faith, in their real and determinate, or in any ONE certain SENSE.

HITHERTO we have only heard the sound of AGREEMENT. But instead of the *Thing itself*, we have met with such Declarations, as too strongly intimate a *Non-Agreement*, or as wide a Difference between us, in our Sentiments concerning

cerning the Doctrine of the Trinity, as they or we can be thought to reckon there is, in point of *Scripture-Evidence* and *Certainty*, between a *human Decision* in Matters of Faith, and a *divine Revelation*.

THERE are, *Secondly*, the *same* and other Reasons to question an *Agreement* in our Sentiments concerning the *IMPORTANCE* of the *same* Doctrine. For how can they regard *that* as a *necessary* part of Faith, which they *are not sure is Truth*, or which they look upon as a *human Decision* in which *there may be Uncertainty and Error*, as well as *Security and Truth* *.

HERE therefore we might give over our Pursuit of what we are not likely to meet with in the *Writings* of the *Committee of Non-Subscribing Ministers*, unless we will be satisfy'd with *Shews* instead of *Realities*: But that *this* Part of our Enquiry will lead us to examine *some* Positions in those *Writings* which appear to me to *destroy* the *Importance* not only of *this*, but of *all other Articles* of *Faith* consider'd with respect to any certain and *determinate Sense* of *Scripture*. To go on,

IN the *VINDICATION*, *Pag.* 36. the *Subscribers* had said, " We are far from thinking that
" all the *doctrinal Articles* of the *Church* [of Eng-
" land] are of *equal Importance* and *Necessity*
" with this *particular one*, [*viz.* the *First*.] Tho'
" we are *satisfy'd* of their *Truth*, without which

* *Reply*, *Part. I*, *Pag.* 13. *Part. 2d.* *Pag.* 14. 75. *Authentic Account*, *Pag.* ult. *Occasional Paper*, *Vol.* 3, *Numb.* ii. *Pag.* 22.

"we had not *Subscrib'd* them [at the Appointment of the *Legislature*;] yet few Truths are of *that* Importance, or so fully revealed in Scripture, as this *grand* Article. This lies at the *very* Foundation of Christianity, and runs thorough the whole of it".

THE *Non-Subscribers* are pleas'd to take Notice of this Passage, in their *Reply*, and declare "We believe, with our Brethren, * that THE SCRIPTURE-DOCTRINE of the Trinity, lies at the Foundation of Christianity, and runs through the whole of it, and is the proper Frame and Scheme of the Christian Religion".

WE doubt not but Dr. Clark will say, That the *Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity* (which is the running Title of his Book) is the proper Frame and Scheme of the Christian Religion. What pity is it then, the Committee did not here expressly signify (tho' in a *Parenthesis* only) whether or no they believe, with their Brethren, that the above-mention'd Article, or the *Answers* in the *Catechism* do truly express the *Scripture-Doctrine*? But tho' they are shy of saying any Thing expressly to this decisive Point, yet even this Concession of theirs seems to intimate they do not. For, since they own that the *Scripture-Doctrine* lies at the Foundation of Christianity, and will not allow this of the *Doctrine* in our Declaration, it is natural to infer, they are not satisfy'd that *Doctrine* is the *Scripture-Doctrine*.

* *Reply*, Part 2d, Pag. 51.

WE persuade ourselves, our Brethren are agreed with us, That the Acknowledgment of a Deity is no more necessary to Religion, than it is to believe there is but *one* God. But do they allow that it is necessary to a Man's being a *Christian*, to believe that *Jesus Christ* is God, in the same absolute and supreme Sense with the *Father*; and so of the *Holy Ghost*? That the Scriptures do ascribe the Characters, Powers, and Glories of the eternal Godhead to these Three, without any Subordination of the divine Nature or Godhead of the one, to the divine Nature or Godhead of the other? If they do not believe this; or if they believe the contrary, what Cause, or whose Cause do they serve in saying, They have no Controversy with the Subscribers about the Doctrine of the Trinity, no Dispute about the Matter of their Declaration; and that they are not concern'd in any Thing they advance, with Relation either to the Truth, or IMPORTANCE of the Doctrine itself? And let any Man who has a grain of common Sense left him, judge, whether they can be of this Persuasion, without concluding that it lies at the Foundation of Christianity to believe that these Three are the one God, of one Substance, Power, and Eternity? Which yet they will not allow, because this is but a Consequence drawn from Scripture-Expressions understood in a certain Sense, and Things necessary, they say, depend not upon Consequences, are not left to Consequences †; or, as Mr. Evans words it, we

† Reply, Part. 2d. Pag. 18, 21.

have no *Warrant* to deny Communion to any, for a *Difference* about *Scripture Consequences*, as long as they own the express *Declarations of Scripture* †. But we believe that some Consequences (and this in particular) have so manifest, indubitable and necessary a *Connexion* with *Scripture-Principles*, that to deny the Truth of the Consequence is to deny the *Principle* it immediately results from.

HERE then it seems we must part. For whatever they say of the *Scripture-Doctrine* in general, (a Phrase of an undetermin'd Signification) they will not say of the *Doctrine* of the Reform'd Churches, as stated in our *Confession of Faith*, that it is the *Scripture-Doctrine*, or that it lies at the *Foundation of Christianity*. We believe that this is the *Faith* once delivered to the *Saints*; and we place it at the Head of every other *Doctrine* that is peculiar to the Gospel. In their account of Things, to make this a necessary *Article of Faith*, or to require a *Profession* of it as a *Term* of Communion, or a *Qualification* for the *Ministry*, is *Imposition*, a *breaking in upon Gospel Liberty*, an implicate Denial of the *Perfection of Scripture*, a *straitning the Foundations of Christianity*, and a *restraining of that Latitude of Expression* in which our great *Legislator* has seen fit to deliver his *Will* to us. In a Word, it is *Popery*, *Schism*, or a *crumbling the Church into Parties*, and every Thing else that is bad. Such *Evidences* they are pleas'd to give us of *Agreement* in our Sentiments concerning the

† Letter, Pag. 19.

Importance of what we believe is the *Scripture-Doctrine* of the Trinity !

BUT let us hear some of their *Reasonings* on this Head.

THEY ask, ‘ *Is the Stress of Importance and Necessity, to be laid upon the Scripture Account of it, or the human Form ? Is all undone, if the last be not acknowledged*’ † ? But what they simply call a *human Form*, we believe is a *divine Decision*, or the *Scripture Account* truly express’d in a *human Form*. Let them prove that our Declaration is not the *Scripture-Doctrine*, that it represents the Matter otherwise than the *Scripture* does, and we will acknowledge the Equity of all their *Censures*. But then we must keep them to their own Concessions, that the *Sense* of *Scripture*, and not the *sound* of Words is *Scripture* ; and that whatever Words do truly express the *Sense* of the *Holy Ghost* will be allowed to carry in them a *Doctrine* of *Divine Inspiration*. Upon this Foundation, we think, we can justify all the Stress we desire to lay upon the *Article* and *Answers* : And dare venture to affirm, that to reject them, is to reject a *Divine Truth* of the greatest Importance.

THEY go on, ‘ *Are they not Christians, who believe in Christ, and take the Bible as the Rule of Faith and Practice, without believing in the Convocation and Assembly ? Are not they Christians who call no Man Master but Christ, and stand up for his SOLE Authority in the Church ? Who*

† Reply, Part II. Pag. 51.

' know no Foundation but that of the Prophets and Apostles, JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF being the chief Corner-Stone, &c. ?

BUT they do not believe in Christ with that Faith which the Bible requires, who do not believe him to be one God with the Father. We can truly say that we know not what it is to believe in the Convocation or Assembly. It is a Language we are not accusom'd to ; tho' perhaps, they who believe in a Creature might help us to understand it. This however, we can tell them, that we were no more determin'd or influenc'd by their Authority in Subscribing as we did, than our Brethren were determin'd by the Authority or Advice of a Club of Arians or Free-Thinkers in the Part they acted. But if by this mean Piece of Wit they intend to insinuate, That no Man, who takes the Bible for his Rule, can believe with the Convocation and Assembly, That in the Unity of the Godhead there be Three Persons, of one Substance, Power and Eternity, the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST ; we cannot help it. It is our Judgment that he who believes the Contrary, has departed from the Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles in this distinguishing Article of the Christian Religion ; whatever Compliments he may pay to the Sole Authority of Christ ; of which he must have very diminutive Thoughts, who regards him only as a dependent Power. And if we have not the Satisfaction to know, that this is the Judgment of our Brethren ; if we have the Mortification to be told such Things as are inconsistent with their being of

this Mind ; yet, we have this Consideration to hearten us, That it has been the *Sense* of the *Catholick Church* in all Ages, even from the Time the Disciples were first called *Christians* at *Antioch*. Who, tho' they might not, as our Brethren intimate, be requir'd to *sign human Forms*, (for the *Mystery* of prostituting the *Words* of God to *Guile* and *Prevarication* was not so well understood in those *Virgin Times*,) yet, doubtless were required, and oblig'd to give a *Confession* of their Faith in *such Words* as might satisfy all concern'd that they did indeed believe in Christ, and receive the *Scripture-Doctrine*, that is, the *Mind* of God (not the *Sound* of Words) as they had been taught by the Apostles. And some of Note among them were severely *censur'd*, for *denying* the *Sense* of Scripture, when it is more than probable that they still own'd the *Words*.

WE are oblig'd to our Brethren for any good *Advice* they are pleas'd to give us. But when they advise us 'not to lay the Stress, either of the ' *Doctrine*, or its Importance, upon *human Forms* ; ' but upon those only in which the *Holy Ghost* has laid ' it down † ; we are at a loss to know what they intend by it. And as often as they think fit to give us *such Advice*, we must tell them as often, That what we Subscrib'd in *Form*, we believe to be the *Scripture Doctrine*. Will they say that *human Words* cannot truly express the *Sense* of the

Holy Ghost in this Matter? Then *human Minds* cannot *truly* conceive what *that* Sense is: And then the Doctrine itself signifies nothing. Will they say that the Words of our Declaration do not *truly* express that Sense? Here it seems, they know not what to say. But whether they will say so or not, we can satisfy them thus far, that we do not lay the *Importance* of the Doctrine, upon its being express'd in our Form. It is all one to us *what Form* is us'd, provided it be a *Form of sound Words*, and represents what is intended to be signify'd by it, without *Deceit* or *Ambiguity*. We do also freely declare, that we reverence the *Forms in which the Holy Ghost has laid down this Doctrine*, as much as our Brethren can do. Whoever sincerely believes the *Truths* contain'd in *these*, (without which it is Nonsense to talk of *believing Words*,) can have no *Exception* against our Form, and is indued with a *Divine Faith*, tho' his Tongue were dead to utter Sounds, and he should, in a *pettish Humor*, refuse to *subscribe* the Scriptures themselves, out of a vain Presumption, lest others should be *thereby* tempted to believe the Bible upon *his Authority* *. (For *that Reason* is as strong against Subscribing the *Words of Scripture*, as any *other Words* that *truly* express the *Sense of Scripture*.) But when the Question is, *How we understand* the Expressions of Scripture, or in *what Sense* we take the *Words* of the *Holy Ghost*; and that to *satisfy* others, who cannot pe-

* *Authentick Account*, Pag. 24.

netrate into our *inward Persuasions*, that we do indeed *understand* them, and take them in a certain *determinate* Sense; when this, I say, is the Question, it is a *playing* with the Words of Scripture, and a *mocking* of our Neighbour, to lay the *Evidence* of what we believe, upon a general Acknowledgment of *Scripture Terms*.

AND as to the *Importance* of the Doctrine, if it may *but* prevent our Brethrens putting themselves to the Trouble of repeating their *Advice*, I will venture to tell them, that we lay it upon the *Nature* and *Quality* of the Doctrine itself, which we apprehend runs through the whole *Bible*, from *Genesis* to the *Revelation*; and upon that *Influence* it hath upon *every Part* of the *Christian Life*, as it *ascertains* the *Object* of our *Worship* and *Dependence*, is the *Ground* of our *Hope*, and the *Foundation* of all acceptable *Obedience*. Nor do we see any *Reason* to retract those *remarkable Words* (as they call them) in the *Vindication*, *Pag. 51.* which gave *Occasion* to their *Advice*; for
 ' as we are still persuaded that *Truth* without Ho-
 ' *liness* and *Charity* will avail nothing, so we firm-
 ' ly believe that *Truth*, and *this Truth* in particu-
 ' lar, has a necessary Influence upon *both the other*.
 Upon this our *Advisers* interrogate, † ' *Are they*
 ' *certain, that this Truth in THEIR Words has a*
 ' *such a necessary Influence upon Holiness and Charity,*
 ' *that the Holiness and Charity which do not proceed*
 ' *from their Explication, can never be truly Evan-*
 ' *gelical*' ?

† Reply, Part II. Pag. 75.

To which I answer. We know that *Morality* proceeds from *Moral Knowledge*, or that *Knowledge* of God and of *ourselves* which is so suited to our natural Capacities, that we may attain to it, and make Improvements in it, without any supernatural Revelation: And that *Gospel Holiness* proceeds from the *Knowledge* and *Belief* of the *Gospel*, *through Faith in Christ Jesus*. But what *Virtue* proceeds from mere *Words*, any otherwise than as they are *Signs* of certain *Ideas* or *Truths*, we know not. We never imagin'd that the *Words* of our Declaration could operate like a *Charm*; or that there is any *Efficacy* in that peculiar *Order* in which they are cast. I cannot therefore think that this *Question* of theirs is pertinent, unless our Brethren are of Opinion that *Words*, not *Truths*, are the *Objects* of Faith. But tho' it be not necessary to express the *Doctrine of the Trinity* in our *Words* (nor would any *Words* be necessary if the same *Truths* might be as easily convey'd to our Understandings by other *Signs*) yet we apprehend it is necessary, to *Faith* and *Holiness*, to believe the *Doctrine itself*, which is truly express'd in them. And tho' we dare not pronounce a *Damnatory Sentence* against those, who, through *Ignorance*, and without any conscious Hatred of the Truth, may hold the *contrary Error*, but leave all *Judgment* concerning their *eternal State* to our great and merciful *High Priest* "that knows how to have
" Compassion on the Ignorant and those that are
" out of the Way, and to give them Repentance to
" the Acknowledgment of the Truth"; yet we cannot but look upon it as a very dangerous *Error*;
such

such as we are warn'd against by the *Holy Apostles* †; and which we dare not encourage, by holding *Communion* with those who openly maintain or propagate it.

WHETHER the above mention'd *Queries* were propos'd by the *Committee*, to shew the great *Value* they put upon the *Confessions* of the *Reform'd Churches*, or as a *Reflection* upon them, or as so many *Signs* of *Agreement* with the *Subscribers* in their *Sentiments* concerning the *Trinity*; they can best tell. But to come more closely to the *Point in Hand*.

I will not presume to advise my *Reverend Fathers*, and *Brethren*; but, if they would not call it an *INQUISTION*, I have a *Request* to make to them, in which many others are ready to join. It is this, That they would please to let us know, whether they judge it necessary, that we should take the *Words* of *Scripture* concerning the *Trinity*, and the *Deity* of our *Blessed LORD*, in any one certain and determinate *Sense* of those *Words*? To prevent an *ambiguous* Answer, my *Request* centers in this single Point, whether he, who in his *Sense* of *Scripture*, believes that *Jesus Christ*, the *WORD* or *Logos*, is one *God* with the *Father*, the *true*, *eternal*, and *supreme* *GOD*, who adores and worships him as *such*; the like being understood of the *Holy Ghost*; and he, who in his *Sense*

† 2. Pet. II. 1. Jude 3. 4. 5.

of Scripture, believes the *contrary*, who regards the *Son* and *Spirit* as *naturally* diverse from, *inferior* to, and *dependent* on the *Father* as to their *Being* and *Attributes*, as on the *supreme Cause*, yet worships them with distinct, tho' inferior, *Religious Worship*, may, each of them, notwithstanding such their *contradictory* Sentiments and *Belief*, be said to hold the *Scripture-Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, so far as it is a *necessary part* of Faith? A plain Answer here, either from the *Body*, or *Committee* of the *Non-Subscribing Ministers*, might be of some Service, either to clear the *profess'd Agreement*, which now seems to be wrapt up in *Darkness*, or for ever to silence the Noise of it.

At present it appears to me that the *Subscribers* and *Non-Subscribers* would give *contradictory* Answers to this Question.

THE *Subscribers* are agreed it is *necessary* there should be a Certainty of Faith among Christians, in a Doctrine of this Importance. That without it the Purity of Faith and Worship cannot be well preserv'd in *Christian Churches*. And that the *Difference* as is above stated, (that is, between a *Modern Arian*, and a *Catholic Christian*) immediately strikes at the *Scripture-Doctrine*, or the *Foundation* of our Christianity; and is not barely a Difference about the *Manner* of accounting for, of proving, or illustrating the *same Doctrine*; in which we allow there may be different Theories without Prejudice to Religion.

BUT by all that can be gathered from the publick Aſtings of the *Non-Subscribers*, or the *Writings* of their *Committee*, we cannot help thinking that they are for allowing a *Latitude* of Thought in this Matter, and that it is their Opinion, Men may ſafely, without Hazard to themſelves, or Injury to the Faith, take the Words of Scripture relating to it, in a *contradictory Senſe*.

SOME of them may eſteem this a noble Character; and others may call it an *unkind Inſinuation*. But in what manner ſoever it is reſented, it is incumbent on me to aſſign the *Reaſons*, why I repreſent them as Perſons who ſeem to regard the *preſent State* of the Controverſy concerning the *Trinity*, as a Matter of no great *Importance* in Religion.

I know not whether they will allow of *Conſequences* drawn from their Conduct in relation to *Exeter*. But *Actions* have a *Meaning* as well as *Words*. And it will not be eaſy to perſuade Men that they put a great *Valuation* upon the *common Faith*, who at the ſame Time that they refus'd *explicitely* to declare for it, us'd all poſſible *Endeavours* to ſcreen thoſe from *Cenſure*, who were upon good Grounds, ſuſpected to have departed from it; and that before their *Interpoſition* was deſir'd by the Parties concern'd †.

W B

† Since I have touch'd upon this Affair, which kindled the Flame here in LONDON, it will not be improper to take notice of the Reply the Gentlemen of the *Committee* are pleas'd to make to a Paſſage in the *VINDICATION*, *Pag. 4*. There, after it was obſerv'd, That 'this is a Season wherein the Doctrine of the

ever Blessed TRINITY, and especially the GODHEAD of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, and of the HOLY SPIRIT, is contested by some, and openly denied by others; *It follows*. Some of us had but *too just* Ground to suspect that one or more of the Ministers, whose Case was under our Consideration were gone into those Errors. This last Period, it seems, refers to a Conversation some of the Ministers had with Mr. Peirce in London. Let us hear the Remarks that are made upon it. *Reply*, Part I. Pag. 9. This is a Secret we [the Non-Subscribers] were not let into. We hope this *too just* Ground had more Justice in it than the Managements at Exeter.-----If there was more than sufficient Ground for suspecting the Exeter Ministers, we wonder that nothing of these Grounds should be laid before our Assembly.-----We had no Right to judge the Hearts of any; and we think it looks very ill, that those SOME, who had *too just* Grounds for the Part they acted in Opposition to us, should retain their Proofs to themselves, as if they did it with a Design to bring some Reproach upon us afterwards. Thus far the Committee.

As for the Managements at Exeter, the Gentlemen concern'd, who understand their own Constitution, and the Reasons of their Conduct, better than the Non-Subscribers do, can no doubt justify the Measures they have taken to render themselves easy. If some Formalities were waiting in the manner of their Proceedings, that might be owing to the Difficulties their Ministers brought them under. It is somewhat odd, the Non-Subscribers should take all Opportunities to censure that worthy People, and to blacken their Conduct, without dropping one Word to testify a Dislike of the Principles or Conduct of their *Arianiz'd* Ministers.

BUT to wave this. Any one who knows the true state of Things, will be surpriz'd at some Things in the foregoing Lines of the Committee. If these SOME whom they point at in Capitals, kept the Grounds of Suspicion Mr. Peirce had given them, a Secret, (which it does not appear they were in Honour or Conscience oblig'd to do) with what Consistency can the Authors of this Complaint charge them with having acted in this Matter, as if they thought a Heretick was not only to be admonish'd and re-jested, but that even FAITH WAS NOT TO BE KEPT with such? *Reply*, Part I. Pag. 27. Is it probable that Mr. Peirce would be more free with them, than with some of the Non-Subscribers, with whom he was thought to hold a stricter Correspondence? Have not some of them confess'd that they knew of the Conversation in which Mr. Peirce was more free with some of his Brethren, than they desir'd he should, very soon after it was over? How can these say this was a Secret they were not let into? Was it not urg'd in our Assembly, that Mr. Peirce had given all the

Reason in the World to suspect him? Was it not long before, the Subject of common Conversation? This was no *Secret*. It was the Boast of the Party that Mr. Peirce was their *Convert*. And, if it would not be reckon'd Presumption, we could appeal to their own Consciences, whether some of them did not suspect that Mr. Peirce was gone into the *New Scheme*, though they expressly say, That his *OPINION, AS TO ANY THING ERRONEOUS WAS UNKNOWN TO THEM*? And whether, notwithstanding this, they did not carry on their *pacifick* Plan with the utmost Vigor, to prevent if possible, his being turn'd out? And if those *SOME* who had more than *sufficient* Ground for the part they acted, in refusing to come into a Plan, which they saw with their own Eyes, or thought they saw, would be of dangerous Consequence to the Cause of common Christianity, and hazard a *TRUTH*, which they would not willingly see lost, or disgrac'd in their Day, or thro' their Means, did not think it proper to mention a *private* Conversation, in a *publick* Assembly, this ought not to be turn'd to their Reproach, by those who might be very well suppos'd, to know at least, as much of the Matter as they did. But how does this look? Some of the *Non-Subscribers* actually knew of what pass'd in that Conversation, whilst Mr. Peirce was in Town, or very soon after; and upon this they found a very criminal Charge against their Brethren, telling them roundly that they '*acted as if even Faith was not to be kept with Hereticks*', (than which, Calumny itself could not have invented a viler or more spiteful Accusation; there being nothing in *POPERY* more shocking to all the Remains of Goodness, left in human Nature, than this detestable Principle :) And yet here they turn it to their Disadvantage another Way, as if they had kept this Conversation a *Secret*, with a *DESIGN* to bring some Reproach upon them [the *Non-Subscribers*] afterwards.

HERE I cannot help putting this Question to our Brethren: Would they have acted otherwise than they have done in Relation to their late Management, in Case Mr. Peirce had been so free with them, as with those *SOME* whom they are pleas'd to censure in so severe a Manner? In Case he had given them *too just* Ground to suspect his having departed from the Faith of the Reform'd Churches? Or had told them, as he has since done the World, '*I can't find their Faith to have been receiv'd before the fourth Century, if it was then*. Intimating at the same Time, That it was the Faith only of those *ANTICHRISTIAN* Ages, which followed the first and Best'? Mr. Peirce's Remarks upon the Account of what was transacted in the ASSEMBLY at EXOM; Pag. 28, &c. If notwithstanding such Information from himself, they would have acted the same Part they have done, in Opposition to the *Subscribers*, why do they insinuate that their Brethren had a *FRAUDU-*

WE should not however, be so uneasy on this Head, had we only the *Consequences* of their Actions
to

LENT DESIGN, in retaining their Evidences to themselves ? Do they hereby *confess* that their Conduct had justly deserv'd *Reproach*, in Case they had had *just Grounds* to suspect that Mr. Peirce was gone into the *New Scheme* ? If not, it will be hard to wipe off the *Reproach* they bring upon themselves by their *Shuffling*. If they do suggest by this, that they had acted *another Part*, had they but known, or on *good Grounds suspected*, that Mr. Peirce was gone off from the commonly receiv'd Doctrine ; we can again appeal to themselves, whether they did not *suspect*, and upon good Grounds too, that Mr. Peirce was actually gone off from *that* Doctrine ! The Differences at Exeter about the Doctrine of the Trinity, made too great a Noise in the World, several Months before the Assembly at *SALTERS-HALL*, not to reach their Ears. And, by the Time the *Pacifics* were prepar'd, all *England* knew there was more than sufficient Ground for suspecting some of the *Exeter Ministers*. Only the *Non-Subscribers* knew nothing ! Or did not apprehend, that declaiming against the common *DOXOLOGIES*, forbidding the Use of them in *Singing*, forbearing to give *GLORY* to the HOLY GHOST in publick Prayer, asserting a Subordination of ONE or TWO GODS to a THIRD, and refusing to own that the BLESSED THREE are the ONE ONLY GOD, were *just Grounds* of Suspicion ! Nor do they seem to be yet satisfy'd, the *Contentions at Exeter were about the DOCTRINE of the TRINITY*, but only about the *Doctrine of the Sufficiency of Scripture*, &c. Reply, Part I. Pag. 4. 5.

BUT whatever they thought, or do think, with respect to the *Exeter Ministers* ; whether they think they have to this Day, *just Grounds* to suspect any of them of holding *dangerous Errors* ; it could hardly be a *Secret* to them that Mr. Peirce was, upon the *justest Grounds*, suspected of favouring the *New Scheme*. And whether the *Methods* they went into for his Sake, and for the Sake of others under the like Suspicions, are not a strong Prejudice against a Man's believing, they have the same Sentiments with the *Subscribers* in Relation to the IMPORTANCE of the *commonly receiv'd Doctrine of the Trinity* ; (for we must keep them to that Point, whilst we retain our own Principles) yea, whether they do not naturally suggest the contrary, that they look upon the Difference between us, and the Disciples of *Dr. Clark*, as a Matter of little, or no Moment ; I leave to the Consideration of the Intelligent, Impartial Reader.

to look to. It would seem from their *darling Principles*, that they are far from judging it *necessary* there should be a *Certainty* of Faith among Men, either in *this*, or any other *doctrinal* Point of Revelation ; but that we may safely take the Characters of GODHEAD given in Scripture to the WORD, and HOLY GHOST in quite different Senses : That tho' we are indeed oblig'd to own the *express Words* of Scripture, (which we cannot well do, without putting *some* Sense or *other* upon them) yet it is not *necessary*, not even to *Christian Communion*, to take them, or *profess* we take them in any one *fix'd* or determinate Sense. I would not willingly mistake their Meaning. They tell us with respect to this Subject, of a *Latitude of Expression* †, which they will by no means have to be *restrain'd* by any such Declaration, as might *ascertain* others in what Sense we understand the Words of our great Legislator. They say, ' *The Words of Divine Wisdom are big with Sense, and may sometimes purposely design to convey more Senses than one ; or only give a general Notion of the Thing, without determining Particulars about it**. And what is this, but to say, that provided we are not *Deists* or *Anti-Scripturists*, it does not enter into the *Essence* of Faith, what *particular Construction* we put upon the Words of the *Holy Ghost* concerning this Doctrine? So that if by the *Word* GOD when applied to the Person of CHRIST, one shall

† *Authentic Account*, Pag. 26,

* *Reply*, Part 2, Pag. 24.

mean a *dependent inferior* GOD, who exists not by absolute *Necessity* of Nature; and another shall take it to be meant of HIM in the *same* absolute and supreme Sense, in which it is to be understood of the FATHER; they are, nevertheless, agreed in the *main*, since they both own the *Scripture* Words, and call *Christ* GOD. At this rate *Arians* and *Socinians* believe the *Scripture-Doctrine* of the Trinity, as much as any of the *Non-Subscribers* do. And they have taken care to prevent a *Discrimination* in *Christian Churches*, by providing that an *Assent* to *human Words*, (how truly soever they express the *Sense* of *Scripture*, which is *Scripture*;) should never be requir'd of any, 'as
'an *Evidence* of their *Soundness* in the *Faith*'^{*};
'or,' for a *Testimony* that they do not forsake or
'wrong the *Scriptures*'[†]; or, to give *Satisfaction*
'that they really understand the *Sense* of *Scripture*'[‡].
And if this be not giving up, the commonly receiv'd *Doctrine*, at least the *Importance* of it, it will be hard to tell what is.

WHAT *Stress* they lay upon Men's Understanding the *Words* of *Scripture* relating to the *Trinity* in their *real*, or in any one certain Sense, will more fully appear by examining what they have offer'd distinctly on this Head. *Reply, Part. 2. Pag. 16, 17, 18.*

* *Reply, Part 2. Pag. 70.*

† *Reply, Part 1.*

Pag. 18. 19.

‡ *Reply, Part 2. Pag. 71.*

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' *an Evidence* of their *Soundness* in the *Faith**;
' or, 'for a *Testimony* that they do not forsake or
' *wrong* the *Scriptures*†; or, to give *Satisfaction*
' that they *really understand* the *Sense* of *Scripture*††. And if this be not *giving up*, the commonly receiv'd *Doctrine*, at least the *Importance* of it, it will be hard to tell what is.

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* Reply, Part 2. Pag. 70.
Pag. 18. 19.

† Reply, Part 1.
†† Reply, Part 2. Pag. 71.

THE *Subscribers* had observ'd *, That 'the Scripture in these great Articles must have a *determinate Sense*, not various, much less *Contradictory*'. Then follows, 'If People shall deny what upon the *strongest Grounds*, I am bound to believe is the *real and determinate Sense* of the *Holy Ghost*, tho' they still make use of the *Words* of Scripture, I cannot but conclude them to have *renounc'd* the Faith; [*in that Point.*] And if my declaring this be called a *censuring* and *condemning* them, I cannot help it: For so long as they shall hold these Words in a *contradictory* Sense, it is certain *they or I* must be in a dangerous Error; and whilst upon the foremention'd Grounds, I am *fully* persuaded of my being in the *right*, I cannot forbear concluding them to be in the *wrong*'. Thus far the *Vindication*, to which the *Answer* of the *Committee*, in the place refer'd to, is very remarkable, and will lead us to a more perfect View of the *Grounds* of our *present Differences*.

THEY deny not the *first Proposition*, That 'the Scripture in these great Articles must have a *determinate Sense*'. To this they are so liberal as to add, '*Ay, and in all other Articles, LITTLE as well as GREAT* †'. I shall not stay to enquire, whether by their *Ay and Little*, they did not intend to insinuate, That all Articles of Faith are *little or great, necessary or not necessary*, not accord-

* *Vindication*, Pag. 12.
Pag. 16.

† *Reply*, Part 2.

ing to what they are in their own *Nature*, but according to the *Judgment* or *Consciences* of those Persons who apprehend them to be *little* or *great* necessary or not necessary. But what signifies this *Concession*, if it had not been given with a *Sneer*, when they destroy the *Necessity* of taking the *Words* of Scripture, with respect to any Article of Faith, *little* or *great*, in the *real*, or in any one *definite*, Sense? Whether they do so or no, let the intelligent Reader judge from their own Exceptions against what is farther asserted in the foregoing Citation: viz. *If People shall deny what, upon the strongest Grounds, I am bound to believe is the real and determinate Sense of the Holy Ghost, tho' they still make use of the Words of Scripture. I cannot but conclude them to have renounc'd the Faith, &c.* Here it seems, they 'cannot but observe a Change of Person, from the *WE* that spoke in the beginning of the Paragraph; and therefore would hope that only some SINGLE bold Man has adventur'd to say this in his own Name without Consent of the rest of his Brethren'. A very critical Remark. As for the change of Person, any Grammarian can tell them that it is neither unusual nor inelegant. And if it will be of use to them to know, whether the *Subscribers* will stand to what is said in this Paragraph, (whether by some single, or some double bold Man, it matters not, provided he was not double-minded;) I will venture to assure them that I know not of one Man among them, who is not bold enough to say the same Thing. In the mean Time let us consider what they have to say against it.

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THEY begin, not without Ceremony, with some Questions. ‘*But pray, Sir, or Gentlemen, what if upon the strongest Grounds another thinks himself bound to deny, what you believe †?*’ If he does, he will act a very honest part in declaring so. Then the Controversy will be put upon a right Foot, which are strongest, his Grounds or Mine. In this Way some Light may be struck out; which can never be the Effect either of a sneaking Concealment of a Man’s Faith, or of a detestable Neutrality. But whatever he thinks of his own Grounds, whilst he denies what I believe is a Truth, I cannot possibly not conclude that he denies that Truth. I believe with my whole Heart and Soul, that JESUS CHRIST is the great GOD, absolutely supreme over all. Whoever denies the Truth of this Proposition; I am fully persuaded renounces the Faith in this Particular. And if he believes that the contrary is the Faith of the Gospel, he must, to be consistent with himself, conclude that I renounce the Faith. Nor shall I persecute him for so doing; but shew myself willing to receive Conviction from him, or to offer Instruction to him.

THEY ask again, ‘*Who made your believing a Standard for his Faith?*’ No Body. ‘*Or your Grounds of Faith obliging to any, farther than the Strength of them can be made to appear?*’ Must any believe your determinate Sense, whether they can discern your strongest Grounds or no?

I answer, That as the *Sense* of Scripture is but one, so all true Believers have the *same Grounds* of Faith, the *Testimony* of God. And if my *determinate Sense* be the *real Sense* of the *Holy Ghost* (and as *such* I must regard it, whilst the *Sense* of Words, and not the *Sound*, is the Matter of my Faith.) Another may be under the strongest Obligations to admit the *same Sense*, and upon my *Grounds* too, even tho' he actually *discerns* them not, and it may not be in my Power to remove his Prejudice. The Reverend Mr. Evans could tell them, That he freely allows with me, the *Question* is not, what a Man sees, or does not see, but what he ought to see, what he might see, if his Mind were not inlaid with Prejudice and Passion, and he humbly resign'd his Understanding to God. If they mean any Thing contrary to this, if they mean that a Man's not discerning my Grounds, supposing them to be just, discharges him from all Obligation to believe as I do, if their *Question* has any determinate *Sense* or Meaning, I must be free to tell them that *their Ground* is very dangerous to go upon. They advance a Principle which resolves all the *Authority* of God's Word over Man, or its Power to command our Assent and Obedience, into Mens own *Apprehensions* concerning it. Which is, in reality, to strip it of all *Authority*, and to make Mens own Judgment the Standard of every Truth they are bound to believe. So that an honest *Deist*, who cannot, for the Heart of him, discern the *Evidences* of a divine Revelation, or a *Jew* who sees not that CHRIST is the *Messiah*, as well as an *Arian* or *Socinian* to whom

the Proofs of *his eternal Power and Godhead* do not appear, have neither of them, any Thing to apprehend upon the Score of *Infidelity*. And tho' our Brethren may design to extend their indulgent Principle no farther than the Verge of a *Christian* Profession; yet a poor blind *Jew*, or a good natur'd *Anti-scripturist*, who sees not the strong Grounds upon which we take the *Bible* for our Religion, may with as good a Grace, claim the Protection of it, as he who, pretending a Reverence for the *Scripture*, shall deny a Doctrine that runs through the whole of it, as the commonly receiv'd *Doctrine* of the *Trinity* most certainly does. Briefly, my Grounds of Faith are not obliging to any *because* they are *mine*, but *because* they are (what I take them to be) *good* and *just*. And then another may be obliged to believe my determinate *Sense* of *Scripture*, whether he discerns my strongest Grounds or no. For all that his *not discerning*, proves is, that the Man is *blind*; not that he is under *no* Obligation to see what he does *not* see, and to believe what he *does not* believe. To such the Prophet speaks, *Hear ye Deaf, and look ye Blind, that ye may see*, Isa. 48. 18.

THEY proceed, 'If so, (if another is oblig'd to believe as I do, whether he sees my strongest Grounds or no) 'then at the Top of this Paragraph 'you denied the AUTHORITY of Men in MATTERS of FAITH, only to assume it to yourself'. Never was any Thing said more inconsequent.

† Reply. Part 2. Pag. 17.

Do I assume an Authority in Matters of Faith by exercising my own Judgment concerning such Matters? This is all I do, when I *conclude* that a *Deist* is bound at his Peril, to be *determin'd* by the *Authority of Scripture*, even tho' he discerns *not* the Grounds upon which I, and all other *Christians* believe it to be the *Word of God*: And that his *not seeing* these Grounds cannot discharge him from the *Obligation* to believe. Or, when I *conclude* that an *Arian* ought to be *determin'd* by *Scripture-Evidence*, the same I found my Belief upon, that the *sacred THREE*, are the *one GOD*; even tho' he should not see *that Evidence*: Since his *not seeing* may well be his own Fault, (as when a Man is resolv'd before Hand not to believe) but it can never dissolve the *OBLIGATION* he is under, to receive the Testimony of *GOD*. Herein I only use my own Judgment, without bringing any Bonds upon another Man's Conscience from my Authority. I think other Men are under the *same Obligation* with myself, to pay a sacred Regard to the divine Oracles. And if the Grounds upon which I take the Scriptures, relating to the *great Articles* of Faith, in a *certain determinate Sense*, are *just*, and such as determine *that* to be the *real Sense* of the Holy Ghost, a Man's Ignorance of them, or his saying he discerns them not, can never be pleaded in his Justification, if he has had *Opportunities* of knowing them; without which the most express Declarations of Scripture cannot bind the Conscience. Here the Obligation results, not from any Thing I *determine*, but from the *Goodness* of
the

the Grounds I go upon ; which would be equally binding to another if I saw them not. Only, I hope, my seeing them does not enervate their Force. And what is in all this like *assuming Authority* in Matters of Faith ?

THEY immediately add, ‘ For we MUST CONFESS, we have hardly known THIS DONE more authoritatively, even by those very Men, who us’d to preface their Determinations with a *visum est nobis & spiritui sancto*, and to point them at the Close with a thundring Anathema, than by this Conclusion of yours’, That “ if People shall deny what upon the strongest Grounds you are bound to believe is the real and determinate Sense of the Holy Ghost, you cannot but conclude them to have renounc’d the Faith”.

WHETHER they were under a Necessity of confessing this (as their *must* seems to intimate) who felt themselves under no Necessity of confessing with us, That the Son and Holy Ghost are one God with the Father, they best know. But if they were indeed necessitated, either through Ignorance to mistake, or wilfully to put a false Construction on their Brethrens Words, who can help it. Had they been at Liberty, when they were supporting such an *invidious Charge*, to have cited the whole Passage, the Reader would have seen, that the Words which immediately follow, do explain what is intended by *renouncing the Faith*. They are these, “ And if my declaring this, be called a censuring or condemning them, I cannot help it: For so long as they shall hold these Words

“ in

“ in a *contradictory Sense*, it is certain they or I
 “ must be in a *dangerous Error* ; and whilst upon
 “ the foremention'd Grounds, I am fully persuad-
 “ ed of my being in the right, I cannot forbear
 “ concluding them to be in the wrong”. Where
 it is plain, by *renouncing the Faith*, is not meant a
total Apostacy from the Profession of the Christian
 Religion, or such a *falling away* as absolutely con-
 cludes the Person so falling away, under the
Anathema's of the *Holy Ghost*, binding him over
 to *everlasting Destruction* ; but a renouncing it in
 that *Particular*, in which the Persons so censur'd,
 is suppos'd to *deny* the *real and determinate Sense*
 of Scripture in a *necessary Article* of Faith, and to
 maintain a *contradictory* one. For *renouncing the*
Faith and holding *dangerous Errors*, contrary to it,
 are here made one and the same Thing. Whether
 they design'd to make an Impression upon the
 Reader by concealing this, and stopping before
 they came to the Close of the Passage, they can
 best tell. But it will be hard to persuade a Man
 in his right Senses, that my *concluding* another
 Man to be in a *dangerous Error*, is the same with
assuming an Authority to decree Matters of Faith, and
 point such Decrees with a *thundering Anathema*.
 Or, that my saying a *Socinian* has *renounced the*
Faith once delivered to the *Saints*, in the Article of
 the TRINITY, is such *assuming*.

THESE very Gentlemen have confess'd elsewhere,
 That “ any Words which truly express the Sense of
 “ the *Holy Ghost*, must be allowed to carry in them a
 “ Doctrine of *divine Inspiration*, the contrary to
 “ which

‘ which *must be accounted a dangerous Error*’ †; Now, if they are *fully persuaded upon the strongest Grounds*, that any Form of human Words now extant, *truly expresses the Sense of the Holy Ghost*, in any one necessary part of Faith; (and if they are not, I dare venture to pronounce they have their Faith to *seek* :) Must they not *conclude*, That he who wilfully *denies* the Truth express’d in these Words, and wilfully maintains a *contradictory* Sense, is in a *dangerous Error*, and denies the *true* Faith in that Particular? If they *thus conclude*, they are as guilty of *assuming Authority* in Matters of Faith as their Brethren. If they conclude *otherwise*, if they think themselves oblig’d to *conclude*, that he *holds*, or does *not renounce* the Faith or Truth, in such an Instance, who wilfully denies *what upon the strongest Grounds they are fully persuaded is the Faith or Truth*, and maintains a *contradictory* Sense, their Minds must be of a Complexion very different from the rest of Mankind.

BUT to follow the Committee. Their next Words are, ‘ *It is not always easy to come at the determinate Sense, especially in mysterious Texts* *’. Very true. But what could they intend, by bringing in their *mysterious Texts* here? Is there any mention made of *such Texts*, in the Passage to which this is a *Reply*? Are not the *Subscribers* speaking there expressly of the *great Articles* of

† *Reply, Part I. Pag. 24, 25.*
Pag. 17.

* *Reply, Part II.*

Faith,

Faith, those Doctrines that integrate Christianity, and of the *determinate Sense* of Scripture (not of *some* mysterious Texts) concerning those Doctrines? Or, do our Brethren think that the *great Articles* of our Religion depend on the *determinate Sense* of *some* obscure Texts, and not on the whole Tenor of divine Revelation? To have spoke *directly* to the *Point*, they should have said, *It is not easy to come at the determinate Sense of Scripture in these great Articles of Faith.* But this would have been too open, and make those *great Articles* look very little. It would not answer the End of giving a *Turn* to the Thoughts of the Reader, by interposing Words which were not to be the *Point*. A Method that can only serve a *Cause* of which Men are ashamed, or which they are not able to support by fair Dealing, and close Arguing.

It follows, † *And tho' we should be ever so much persuaded that we have hit upon it [the determinate Sense of Scripture; for of that it is we speak, and not of the Sense of some mysterious Texts] in the great Articles of Faith, yet we should think ourselves most presumptuous and unjust in concluding another to have renounc'd the Faith, because he refuses to own that Sense of ours, or denies it to be in his Apprehension the Sense of the Holy Ghost, as long as he readily acknowledges the Words of Scripture.*

THIS is frank enough: And the Reader is to observe that it is not spoken in reference to small

ler Matters, but with respect to the most substantial Doctrines of the Gospel, particularly that of the TRINITY. And have we not here as positive a Declaration as they can make, that upon their Principles, neither *Arians* nor *Socinians* can without *Presumption* and *Unjustice* be censur'd as *renouncing the Faith* in this Point? But perhaps *Arians* (among whom I reckon the *Disciples* of Dr. Clark) and *Socinians* will not acknowledge the *Words* of Revelation? This I doubt our Brethren will not say, for *certain Reasons*—— particularly, because they know the contrary. It is true, they will not acknowledge the *Words* of Scripture relating to this Doctrine, in the *right Construction* and *Application* of those Words; *what is meant* by them, and *of whom* they are intended. But *these Things* belong to the *Sense* of the HOLY GHOST. And whilst we agree in pronouncing the *same Sounds*, and readily own that *such Words* are in the sacred Text, and that we believe them, a *Difference in Sense*, or about *what is meant*, or *of whom* (which *equally* belong to the *Sense* of Scripture) cannot without *Presumption* and *Unjustice*, be made a Ground of *censuring Men as Deniers* of the Faith in any one Article of Religion! Such Demonstrations the Committee of *Non-Subscribing Ministers* are pleas'd to give of *Agreement* with the *Subscribers* in their Sentiments concerning the *Importance* of the COMMONLY RECEIV'D Doctrine of the TRINITY! I am oblig'd so often to use these *human Words* to notify * *the Thing I speak of*, and to distinguish it from

* *Authentick Account, Pag. 15. Margins.*

what Dr. Clark calls the *Scripture-Doctrine*, and from Mr. Whiston's *Primitive Christianity*, and from all other Schemes that are inconsistent with the common Faith of Christians. But let us hear their *Reasons*.

THE first, is, ' If we should be mistaken in our Sense, (which is a Supposition we would ever carry along with us as fallible Creatures) how rash and false must the Censure have been † ?

I shall not dispute the *Right* our Brethren have, EVER to carry along with them the Supposition of their being mistaken. They are egregiously so, if they think that all other Men, who are sensible of their own Fallibility, will yet grant, they never can be sure they are in the *Right*, so as to exclude the Supposition of their being actually in the *Wrong*. We will never allow that the *Scriptures* relating to a Doctrine which lies at the *Foundation* of Christianity, runs through the whole of it, and is the proper *Frame* and *Scheme* of the Christian Religion, are so very obscure ; or, that the inspired Ministers of our great Legislator, were left to such a *Lassitude* of Thought and Expression in committing this Doctrine to writing ; or that the *Providence* of God in preserving, and transmitting it to us has been so *lax*, or suffer'd it to be mingled with such human Corruptions, and Inventions, that we can have no *Certainty* concerning the determinate Sense of Scripture relating to it.

† Reply, Part II. Pag. 17.

Our being *fallible* Creatures, can never be a just Plea for such a wretched Supposition as destroys all Certainty of Faith in a Matter of all others the most *essential* to it. Not to mention that it is to put too great a Compliment upon the *Unbelievers* and *Scepticks* of this Age, to suppose that the Church of *CHRIST*, which is certainly under the Promise of a divine Influence, might through all Ages mistake the *real* Sense of Scripture in a Matter of such vast Consequence as whether the Author of our Religion be a mere Creature, a *dependent* inferior Being, or the *great and true* God? Or, that those Men, who in any Age, have attempted to overthrow the Belief of one only God, the *Father*, the *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, were the very Men who most strictly adhered to the *Scripture-Doctrine*.

BUT the Bible, the Bible only is the Rule of our Faith. Our Reverence for the *Scriptures* will not allow us to grant that we never can be certain of the *infallibility* of this Rule. And such are our Thoughts of the *Perfection* of Scripture, the *Fulness*, *Perspicuity*, and *real Usefulness* of a divine Revelation, as render us inflexible in our Resolution not to yield that we can never be certain we rightly apprehend the *Mind* of God, or the *real and determinate Sense* of his Word, in any Point of Gospel Truth, either to *Papists* on the one Hand, or to unbelieving *Scepticks* on the other.

WHOEVER grants this, whether it be to declare he is no *Enthusiast*, or to shew his Aversion of *Popery*, by adding Weight to the Arguments for the Necessity of an *infallible Interpreter*, or to
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express his Regard for the *Reform'd Churches*, by owning that upon *their Principles* we can come at no *Certainty* of Faith, with respect to the *true intended Sense* and *Scope* of *Scripture-Expressions*, or to manifest his calm and undisturb'd Zeal for the *Faith of the Gospel*; by proclaiming to the World that we can *never assuredly know* what *that Faith* is, that we may *EVER be mistaken in our Sense of it*; or, if it be to persuade *Deists* and *Unbelievers* to imbrace a Religion which they can *never understand*, or be *sure* of any Thing it reveals; or from whatever *other Motive* he grants it; may, with all the *Frankness* in the World, part with his *Bible*, or be content to write himself *Ideot*.

Let our Brethren reconcile this Proposition, *We have no certain Means to ascertain ourselves of the real and determinate Sense of Scripture, in Relation to the Trinity, or any other Doctrine, known by Revelation only*; let them I say, reconcile this with the *Doctrine of the Sufficiency and Perfection of the Holy Scriptures*, if they can. This they are bound to do, or to deny the *Perfection of Scripture*, of which they would be thought the great Assertors, or to retract their *everlasting Supposition*, if they design'd it should reach farther than their own Persons.

I have in my *Dissertation concerning the Authority of Scripture-Consequences*, attempted to vindicate the Claim of actual *Certainty* in Matters of Faith, where there is not absolute *Infallibility*. And therefore need say the less of it here.

BUT are our Brethren indeed resolved *EVER* to carry along with them the *Supposition* that they may
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be mistaken? Are they not yet certain that they rightly understand any thing revealed in Scripture? How heartless must their Work be, if in all they deliver as the Mind of God to the People, (except when they cite the literal Text) the disconsolate Thought seizes them; we may be mistaken, we have no Certainty that what we now say, is the Mind of the Spirit, we know not assuredly what the Gospel means by Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, or what it is for Men to be reconciled unto God, or to trust in CHRIST, or who Jesus Christ is, whether the eternal, omnipotent God, or a dignify'd Creature who is sometimes called God; or what Work he came about, or what that great Salvation means which we preach in his Name; we may be utterly mistaken in our Sense of Scripture concerning these things: which is a Supposition we would EVER carry along with us as fallible Creatures? Is it thus they attain unto the full Assurance of Understanding in the Knowledge of the Mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ?

ARE they not yet certain, that he who made all Things is God Almighty, the supreme Cause and End? Or, are they in doubt whether the Scriptures say that Jesus Christ is he who made all Things? With what Confidence can our Brethren baptize Men in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the Remission of Sins, if they carry this Supposition along with them that they may be mistaken, if they believe that Pardon of Sin, and eternal Salvation may be offer'd and assur'd unto Men in his Name, and by his Authority? Can they worship him in Spirit and Truth,

Truth, can they ascribe *all Glory* to him? Can they with *Assurance of Faith*, call upon the Name of the Lord by Supplication and Prayer? Can they reverence and trust in him as the great *Jehovah*, and acknowledge him supreme *Lawgiver* and *Judge*, who searcheth the *Reins and Hearts*, and will give to every one according to his *Works*; if in their very *Prayers* they carry this *Supposition* along with them, that they may be mistaken, that he whom they thus honour with the same divine Adoration with which they honour the Father, may be but the Father's Creature, or voluntary Production of his Power, intirely depending on him for his Being and Attributes, as on the supreme Cause, himself not supreme? The Moment we slacken here, our Trust and Confidence in a REDEEMER must fall.

I cannot however think that our Brethren carry their *Scepticism* ALWAYS along with them. Do they not sometimes drop their *Supposition*, especially when they speak of *Liberty*, and *Latitude*, and *Creeds* and *Catechisms*? Are they not certain that the Bread in the *Eucharist* is real Bread, and not a human Body? That the Sense which the *Romanists* put upon that Text, *This is my Body*, must be false, tho' the Sound of the Words be for them? Or, will they here suppose that the *Papists* may be in the right, and *Protestants* in the wrong? Or, will they deny all Certainty where their Senses are not Judges? Are these more infallible than their Understandings? Hard must it be with the Army of *Martyrs*, if in the various Deaths and Torments they endured for the *Christian Religion*, or their Separation from the idolatrous Church of Rome

Rome, they carried *this Supposition along with them*, we may be *mistaken*, that Religion, that Protestantism for which we lose our Lives, may for ought we certainly know, be an *Imposture*, or the Device of some *Schismatical Apostates*? And I will venture to say, that *the Grounds* upon which we believe a *traditional Revelation*, or reform'd from *Popery*, are not *stronger* or *more convincing*, than *the Grounds* upon which we receive what is *plain* in Scripture, in a *certain determinate Sense*.

BUT perhaps our Brethren intended what they said chiefly of the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*. They may allow of *Certainty* in other *divine Matters*, and only suppose they may *EVER* be mistaken in their *Sense* of this *Doctrine*. But why should they be so *Sceptical* here? Do they not say with us, That this is a *Doctrine* which lies at the *Foundation* of Christianity, runs through the *whole* of it, and is *the proper Frame and Scheme* of the *Christian Religion*? Surely then it must be of very great Importance. And can it be for the Honour of our Religion that we can *never* be *certain* of the *Sense* of Scripture concerning a *Doctrine* which is the very *Foundation*, and *Scheme* and *Frame* of it? Take away the *Foundation* and *Scheme*, and *Frame* of Christianity, and what remains? Can our Brethren suppose that Christians may be *EVER* *mistaken* in their *Sense* concerning this *Doctrine*, that they *never* can be *certain* of the *Sense* of Scripture relating to it, without supposing also that *this Doctrine* is *very obscurely* revealed, that the *Texts* on which it depends are *dark* and *ambiguous*, and that it is *not necessary* we should

should take them in their *true* and *intended* Sense; and can they conclude *thus* of a *Doctrine* which lies at the *Foundation*, and is the proper *Frame* and *Schema* of the *Christian Religion*, without *concluding* that it is not *necessary* we should take the *Scriptures* in any *Point* of *Revelation* in their *true* *Meaning*? That is, that it is not *necessary* we should be *Christians* *indeed*, but only that we should be so *called*!

LET not our Brethren blame us, if tho' *fallible* *Creatures*, we are not so fond of *their Supposition* as EVER to carry it along with us. We may be mistaken in many Things, but we are *sure* we are not mistaken, when we say, a *Socinian* renounces the *Scripture-Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, whatever *Protestations* he may think fit to make, that he *readily acknowledges the Words of Scripture*. Nor do we think that we are *rash*, *presumptuous* or *unjust* in passing the *same Censure* on the Followers of *Dr. Clark*, or *Mr. Whiston*. The only Way to prove this *Censure* *rash* and *presumptuous*, is to prove it *false*. Which our Brethren may undertake to do, and at the same Time profess they are agreed with the *Subscribers* in their *Sentiments* concerning the *Doctrine of the Trinity*, with as much *Consistency* as that *profess'd Agreement* bears with other express *Declarations* of their own.

I am next to consider a *second Reason* assign'd by the *Gentlemen* of the *Committee*, why they think it would be most *presumptuous* and *unjust* to *Censure* another as *renouncing the Faith*, who should deny what upon the *strongest Grounds* we are bound to

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believe

believe is the *real and determinate Sense* of the *Holy Ghost* in the great *Articles of Faith*, as long as he readily acknowledges the *Words of Scripture*.
 “If we are in the right †, and he in the wrong, yet
 “renouncing the Faith is much too harsh an Ex-
 “pression for what, we doubt not, may be the Case of
 “a good Man, and a sincere Enquirer after Truth;
 “who is so far from renouncing the Faith, that he
 “firmly believes the Rule of it; and if he could but
 “discern the strong Grounds upon which we judge
 “ourselves bound to receive such a Sense of Scrip-
 “ture, would very willingly receive it too”.

I shall examine this Reason by Parcels. But would first remind the Reader, That we are all along speaking of the great *Articles of Faith*, particularly the *Doctrine of the Trinity*; and of the *Sense of Scripture* (not of some mysterious Texts) relating to such Articles: And that by renouncing the Faith, the Subscribers meant not a total renouncing the Rule of Faith, or Profession of Christianity, but a renouncing it in that particular, in which the Person so censur'd maintains a Sense contradictory to what upon the strongest Grounds we are bound to believe is the *real and determinate Sense* of the *Holy Ghost*.

BUT this, they tell us, ‘may be the Case of a
 ‘good Man, and a sincere Enquirer after Truth’. If by these Characters they mean a Believer of the Gospel, whose Desires and Searches after Truth, are truly sincere and uncorrupt, then we

† Reply, Part 2. Pag. 15.

are not oblig'd to believe that this is the Case of a *sincere good Man*. When a Man denies the *true Sense* of Scripture, in the *great Articles* of Faith (which is the Thing now suppos'd) there must be a fundamental Defect somewhere. Either the Scriptures are not *sufficiently clear and full* in these great Articles; otherwise, he is not a *sincere Enquirer* after Truth, who shall deny the *real Sense* of the *Holy Ghost*, to be the real Sense of the Holy Ghost, or maintains a *contradictory Sense*. Now I think it is less presumptuous even to question a Man's *Sincerity*, than to say that the *Scriptures* are not sufficiently clear and full in the *great Articles* of Faith.

THE Truth is, *inward Habitudes* do not properly fall under our Cognizance. We are to judge of the *Profession* a Man makes, and not of the *Sincerity* of his *Heart*. This last is *necessary* to Acceptance with God, but neither is nor can be made a *Term* of *external Communion*, or enter into Consideration in the *Judgments* we pass upon other Men as *sound*, or *not sound* in the Faith. A Man may walk in *Disguise*, and at the same Time alledge his *Sincerity*. He may make a *true Confession* and his Heart, be full of *Guile*. And another who *speaks* as he *thinks*, may not be *truly sincere*. His *Persuasion* may be the Effect of a strong *Prejudice*, which proves him *corrupt* in the Sight of God. That Man is *sincere* before God, who *believeth the Truth*, and walks in the *Light and Love* thereof; not he, who being strongly *deluded*, by *Satan*, or by his own *Pride* and *Self-conceit*, *believeth not the Truth*, but *believeth a LIE*, 2 *Thef.* 2.

So that in all *Judgments* concerning *Heresy* and *sound Doctrine*, and in the Application of such *Judgments* to particular Persons, the proper Question before us, is, not who is a *sincere Enquirer* after Truth, but, who makes a *true Profession*?

AND yet even with respect to *Sincerity* itself, we may without *Presumption* affirm, That *Gospel Sincerity*, and *Faith* in our Lord *Jesus Christ* are inseparable. Consequently, he who denies that *Sovereign LORD* of ours to be *GOD* absolutely supreme over all, or renounces what I am oblig'd upon the strongest *Grounds* to believe is the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity* revealed in the *Holy Scriptures*, gives, relative to me, a stronger *Evidence* that he is not a *sincere Enquirer* after Truth, this very Truth, than any can be alleged to prove that he is.

THEY pursue his Character, 'who is so far from renouncing the Faith, that he firmly believes the Rule of it'.

BUT I. This is *gratis dictum*. Some who loudly proclaim that the *BIBLE* is their Religion may not firmly believe that the *Bible* is the infallible Word of God. Have not our Brethren heard of something like this *Latitudinarian Principle*, that Men may believe and practice what is necessary in Christianity, without believing that all the Books of *Scripture*, as now receiv'd in the Churches of *CHRIST*, are of *divine Authority*, or were committed to writing by Persons who were exempt from Error in what they did of that kind? And do Men thus principled firmly believe the Rule of Faith? Suppose they do reverence the *Scriptures* as the best Account that is extant of the

the Christian Doctrine, and prefer them even to Mr. *Whiston's* CONSTITUTIONS, yet will they not think themselves at *Liberty* to dissent from them in those Instances in which they agree not with their own *distinct Ideas*, or thwart that Pride of Mind, by which we are, alas! Naturally too prone to exalt our own Reasonings, *notions*, against the Knowledge of God? For my own Part, did I not firmly believe that Jesus Christ is the great God (which no Christian can believe without believing him to be one God with the Father) I should, I fear, lose my Esteem for the Scriptures as an *infallible Rule*, and conclude that his Disciples spake many Things of him, which were *not true*, and which no Figures of Speech can justify. II. Do they think that no Person ought to be censured as renouncing the Christian Faith in any necessary part of it, but he who utterly disowns the Rule, and becomes an absolute Infidel. We cannot think so.

MOREOVER III. What Satisfaction can I have that he firmly believes the Rule in the great Article of the Trinity, who denies what upon the strongest Grounds I am bound to believe is the real and determinate Sense of the Holy Ghost? Must I suppose that he firmly believes the Rule, who, I am fully persuaded, perverts and corrupts the Rule? Did the Sadduces firmly believe the Rule as deliver'd by Moses, who denied a Resurrection and a Future-State? Or, those unbelieving Jews of whom our Saviour said, *had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me?* It is certain they readily acknowledg'd his Words, and it will hardly be denied that Christ censur'd them, as *not believing*

ving his *Writings*; with this Admonition, that those very *Writings* in which they *trusted*, would condemn them, because they had not the Knowledge of the Truth, and refused to be determin'd by those *Consequences* that arose out of the Words of their *Legislator*. But *what kind of Faith* is this, the *Committee of the Nonsubscribing Ministers* are for palming upon us? A Faith not much better, if not more absurd, than *that implicit Faith* recommended by the *Doctors of Rome*. A Faith consistent with a gross *Ignorance*, or *Corruption*, or stiff *Denial* of the *true Meaning* of Scripture in the great *Articles of Religion*! Must we always center in this *FATAL Point*, That *as long as we own the Words of Scripture*, it matters not *in what Sense* we take them?

'Tis farther added, '*And if he could but discern the strong Grounds upon which we judge ourselves bound to receive such a Sense of Scripture, would very willingly receive it too*'.

BUT do our Brethren know *what Grounds* would satisfy our modern *Scepticks*, or those refin'd Gentlemen who prefer *Dr. Clark's Scheme* to the *Catholick Doctrine*? If they believe not *Moses* and the *Prophets*, the *Evangelists* and *Apostles*, neither would they believe if one rose from the Dead. I fear our Brethren are too lavish of their Favours to those *sincere Enquirers after Truth*, who cannot believe, with all other Christians, That *in the Unity of the same Godhead there are three Persons*, &c. We have Reason to apprehend they would hardly receive *this Sense of Scripture*, if those very Words were found in the sacred Text, as they

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are in our *Declaration*. They might answer, *these*, or any other the most exprefs *Terms*, in the *same* Manner, and by the *same* Arts, with which they think to evade many Passages of Scripture urg'd against them. How easy would it be to say, this is not *Scripture*, but was foisted in by the *Athanasians*; or to alledge that the Place was grossly corrupted, or that *some* of the most *pinching* Words were wanting in the best Copies, &c. We believe that the *Scripture-Evidence* of this Doctrine, according to the *common Faith* of the *reform'd Churches*, is sufficiently clear and full: And are not without Fear that they are wilfully blind, who refuse to be determin'd by it.

THUS I have considered what our Brethren say, by way of Reply, to this Conclusion, 'If People shall deny what upon the strongest Grounds we are bound to believe is the real and determinate Sense of the Holy Ghost, in the great Articles of Faith, tho' they still make use of the Words of Scripture, we cannot but conclude them to have renounc'd the Faith.' This is our settled Judgment, "And if our * declaring this be called a censuring and condemning them, we cannot help it."

HERE again they reply † 'Certainly you might help it, by distinguishing between the mistaking of a Text, a difficult Text, on a difficult Subject

* Vindication of the Subscribers, pag. 12. † Reply, Part. 2. pag. 17, 18.

'owned to be so on all Hands; and renouncing the Christian Faith.'

BUT pray, Sir, or Gentlemen, did the Subscribers ever pretend to censure a Man as renouncing the Christian Faith for his mistaking of a Text, a difficult Text, on a difficult Subject? Was this ever so much as thought of, much less mention'd betwixt us? Or is the real and determinate Sense of Scripture in the great Articles of Faith, on the Denial of which they know, we expressly founded our Conclusion, the same in their Account, with the Sense of a difficult Text, on a difficult Subject? Every Text the most mysterious has its own proper Sense, and even Texts hard to be understood may be wrested by designing Men to their own Destruction. But no Article of the Christian Faith depends upon any one, or a Number of difficult Texts. And a Man may mistake a difficult Text relating to any Point of Doctrine, yet be sound in that Doctrine: But this cannot be affirm'd of him who shall deny the real and determinate Sense of Scripture concerning it. The Distinction therefore should have been between denying the real and determinate Sense of the Holy Ghost in the Doctrine of the Trinity, or any other necessary part of Faith, and renouncing the Faith in that Particular. And even here the Person so censur'd is not only suppos'd to deny the true Sense of Scripture, but to maintain a contradictory one.

MAY it not then, without giving Offence, be ask'd, why our Brethren went so far out of their Way, to fetch in *'a Text, a difficult Text, on a difficult Subject, own'd to be so on all Hands'*?

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Was it only to cast a *Mist* before the Readers Eyes, that by a voluntary *Mistake* of their own, they might *sincerely* lead him into an *involuntary* One? Or was it also to *insinuate* that the *Difference* between us and the *Gentlemen* of the *New Scheme* is no more than *their*, or *our*, mistaking of a *Text*, a *difficult Text*, on a *difficult Subject*? Or to intimate that the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*, that very *Doctrine* which is the *Foundation*, *Scheme* and *Frame* of the *Christian Religion*, is so very *abstruse* a Thing, and wrapt up in *such* mysterious *Texts*, that either we *cannot*, or that it is not *necessary* we *should* know what is the *real* and *determinate* Sense of *Scripture* concerning it!

THAT our Brethren intended to insinuate these Things, by *shifting* the true State of the Case, and possessing the Mind of the Reader with the Idea of *Difficulty*, I will not affirm. But whether they *did* or *no*, we have Reason to apprehend that such Notions are infus'd into the Minds of Men, who may not be aware of the Ambush that is laid for them. But the Insinuations are false and groundless, whoever they are that make them. There must be a very *essential* Difference between the *true God* and a *made God*; consequently the Difference between those who believe *Jesus Christ* is the *true God*, and those who believe he is not the *true God*, but a *made*, a *dependant God*, must be more, vastly more than the *mistaking* of a *Text*, a *difficult Text*, on a *difficult Subject*. It is such a Difference as concludes *either Side* to be in a very

dangerous Error, an Error destructive of the Faith. And tho' we grant that the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity* is a very great and awful *Mystery*, a *Doctrine* of *pure* Revelation, which has something in it our shallow Capacities are not able to comprehend, yet we have other Thoughts of a *Doctrine* which lies at the *Root*, runs thro' the whole, and is the proper *Frame* and *Scheme* of our Religion, than to grant that it is shrouded with *Darkness*. The *Truth* of the *Doctrine* as stated in our *Declaration*, we contend, is so *clearly* and *fully* revealed in *Scripture*, that nothing but *Prejudice* can hinder *Mens* seeing it. It is no *difficult* Matter to prove that there is but *one* *GOD*; and that to worship any *other* besides him, with *divine* *Worship*, is a Breach of the *first* *Commandment*, and condemn'd in *Scripture* as *Idolatry*. It is not *difficult* to prove that the *Characters* and *Attributes* which *distinguish* the *one* *GOD* from all *other* *Beings* whatsoever, are in *Scripture* applied to the *Blessed* *THREE*: And that *these* *Three* are every where spoken of as *distinct* *Persons*. Nor is it *difficult* to infer from hence, That *there* are *three* *Persons* in the *Godhead*, of *one* *Substance*, *Power*, and *Eternity*, &c. The *Modes* of this sacred *Mystery*, or the *Manner* how these *Three* subsist in the *Unity* of the *same* *Godhead*, or *divine* *Essence*, *God* hath not thought fit to reveal either in *plain* or *difficult* *Texts*. His *Wisdom* saw it rather necessary to set *Bounds* to our *Curiosity*, telling us that we cannot by *searching* find out *GOD*. But does it follow, The *Doctrine* of
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the Trinity is an Article of Faith, the *Manner* whereof is *obscure*, and to human Reason incomprehensible, therefore the *Matter* or *Truth* of the Doctrine *itself* is not *plainly* revealed, nor can we be obliged to believe it in any *certain* Sense? This is no *just* Reasoning, than if it should be said, *We cannot by searching find out God, we cannot find out the Almighty unto Perfection*, therefore it is not *plainly* made known or revealed that *God is*, nor can we be obliged to believe it.

THEY teach us farther to distinguish 'between the Case of one who sees our Grounds, and yet disowns the Conclusion, and one who sees them not, but thinks he sees good Reason to differ from us *.' But by what Criterion shall I know that he who disowns the Conclusion sees my Grounds? If he says the Conclusion is *inconsequent*, I must suppose he sees not my Grounds, but thinks he sees good Reason to differ from me. If he says it is *just* and *necessary*, then tho' he may understand my Grounds he does not believe them, otherwise he would not deny what he himself owns is a *just* and *necessary* Conclusion from Principles acknowledged to be *true*: So that I must still suppose he thinks he sees good Reason to differ from me. If he says that he sees and believes my Grounds, and yet disowns that very Conclusion which he confesses it *just* and *lawful*; in that Case all the Censure I should pass upon him would be, to

* Reply, Part II. Pag. 18.

condemn him to the Care of his *Physician*. I wish therefore they had given us some certain Marks by which to distinguish ‘*between the Case of one who sees our Grounds, and yet disowns the Conclusion; and one who sees them not, but thinks he sees good Reason to differ from us.*’ For at present I must confess I see not the Grounds of this learned Distinction.

THIS however we learn from it, that, according to them, no Man is to be censur’d as renouncing the Faith in any Article of Importance, who sees not our Grounds of Faith, but thinks he sees good Reason to differ from us. Which is to lay the whole Stress of the Obligation to receive divine Truths upon the Judgments we make concerning them. If we were speaking of Things in their own Nature indifferent, or about the Sense of some obscure Texts that may be diversly understood without Prejudice to Religion, I should not think it worth while to contend about that Saying, *Unusquisque abundet in suo sensu*, tho’ even in Things of lesser Moment, I prefer the Apostles Rule, *ἕκαστος ἐν τῷ ἰδίῳ νοὶ πληροῦται*. Let every Man be fully certified in his own Mind, viz. from the Word of God, our only Rule in Religious Matters. But when we are speaking of Things that lie at the very Foundation of our Faith and Hope, here to tell us, That they are not to be censur’d who see not our Grounds of Faith, but think they see good Reason to differ from us, is really to betray the Faith into the Hands of its Enemies. This is a Principle that will not only free from Censure those for whose Service

vice it may be design'd, but is every whit as friendly to *Deism* as to *Arianism*. If he is not to be censur'd as *renouncing the Faith* who denies *Jesus Christ* to be the *Great God*, because he *sees not* the Grounds upon which all true Christians believe him to be the *Great God*, but *thinks he sees good Reason to differ from them*; if this, his *not seeing*, be enough to exculpate him; the same Plea will justify an *Infidel*, who discerns *not* the Grounds upon which we believe the Scriptures are the Word of God, but thinks he sees good Reason to differ from us. Especially considering that the *Scripture-Evidence* of this Proposition, *Jesus Christ is the Great God*, is as clear and irrefragable, as any Argument of what Kind soever, that can be brought to prove the divine Authority of the Scriptures.

I WOULD persuade myself our Brethren *see not* the unavoidable *Consequences* of their own Assertions. If they did, they could never espouse a Notion, which turns *Liberty* into *Licentiousness*, which makes Mens own Apprehensions the sovereign Judge and Measure of all Truths *obligatory* upon Conscience, and in the End can serve no other Cause but that of *Infidelity*. I shall therefore dismiss this Distinction of theirs, by referring them for farther Satisfaction to the *Reverend Mr. Evans*; who, as I have had frequent Opportunities to observe, freely allows with me, *That the Question is not what a Man sees, or does not see, but what he ought to see, and might see, &c.*

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THEY close the Paragraph with this Resolution *, ' *In short, tho' the Scriptures have a determinate Sense, yet every Man must judge of that Sense for himself by the best Light and Means afforded him.* ' This is granted; but what then? ' *And another, who is as fully persuaded as you can be, that he is in the right, and may reckon it to be upon as strong Grounds too, will have just as good Ground to conclude that you have renounced the Faith, as you have to make that Conclusion concerning him.* '

WHAT? *Just as good Ground?* Will not my being in the right and he in the wrong, turn the Ballance, and make *my Grounds* of Censure better than *his*? It seems not. They are resolved to lay the whole Stress of the Matter, not upon the *Truth and Goodness* of the Cause, but upon *what Men may reckon and conceive* of it. This encreases my Suspicion, that there has been a strict Correspondence between the *Writers* of this Part of the *Reply*, and the *Author* (or *Authors*) of the *Occasional Paper*, Vol. III. Numb. II. who resolves the *commonly received Doctrine* of the Trinity, into the *Philosophical Reasonings*, and *uncertain Conjectures* of weak and fallible Men. Which *some* may think is to speak very favourably of it, even as it becomes them to speak of a *human Decision*. But if this be good Reasoning, the *Socinians*, supposing them only to be *fully persuaded*, and to *reckon* their

* *Reply, Part II, Pag. 12.*

Persuasion well grounded, have just as good a Ground to conclude that the Reform'd Churches have renounc'd the Faith in the Article of the Trinity, as they have to make that Conclusion concerning the Socinians. And if they have, it manifestly follows that it is not essential to the Christian Faith, whether a Man believes with the Socinians or with the Reform'd Churches, as long as he readily owns the Words of Scripture, which a Socinian will as readily do as a Non-Subscriber. This is no far fetch'd Consequence, nor could our Brethren not see it.

By this Time the Reader may be able to judge of the PROFESS'D AGREEMENT. He cannot be at a loss what to make of the Words of the Committee, when, *Reply, Part I. P. 6.* They say in the Name of all the Non-Subscribers, 'Thus much we did profess, and this we do profess;' viz. That they were and are 'agreed with the SUBSCRIBERS in their Sentiments concerning the DOCTRINE of the TRINITY.' And *Reply, Part II. P. 75.* 'As the WORLD has been more than once TRULY told on our Part, that we had no Dispute with our Brethren about the MATTER of their DECLARATION, but only as to the Prudence and Expediency of such a Subscription, so we must declare, and have Reason to hope the WORLD will agree with us, that we are not CONCERN'D in any Thing they advance, with Relation either to the TRUTH or IMPORTANCE of the Doctrine itself.'

To this very WORLD including our Brethren, I appeal, whether it does not plainly appear from
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the foregoing *Considerations*, That the *Committee* of the *Non-Subscribing Ministers* have *wrong'd* themselves; and been at a great deal of Pains to set their *own*, and the *Principles* of the *rest* of our Brethren on that side, in a very *false* Light, if they are indeed *agreed* with the *Subscribers* in their Sentiments concerning the *SCRIPTURE-EVIDENCE*, and *IMPORTANCE* of the *commonly received* Doctrine of the *TRINITY*, as stated in our Declaration? Yea, whether they have not *widely* mistook their own Thoughts, and are yet *uncertain* what it is they believe, if they believe that it is *necessary* to our *Christianity*, or to a *credible Profession*, that we should receive the express Declarations of Scripture concerning the *Trinity*, the *Deity* of our *LORD*, and of the blessed *Spirit*, or concerning any *other* Article of Faith, in the *real* and *intended* Sense of the *Holy Ghost*, or in any one *fixed* and *determinate* Sense of his Words? Or, whether upon their Principles, it be not a Matter indifferent, that enters not into the *Life* of Christianity, *what* Persuasion a Man is of in *these* Matters, whether he believes the *Catholick* Sense, or that of *Sabellius*, or of *Arius*, or of *Socinus*, or of *Dr. Clark*, or whether he believes *NEITHER*, *as long as he readily owns the Words of Scripture*, is *fully*, *persuaded* of his own Sense *whatever* it be, and *reckons* he is *so* upon *good Grounds*? And whether such *Scepticism* and *Indifferency* about the *Sense* of Scripture in a Doctrine that is *confessedly* the proper *Frame* and *Scheme* of the Christian Religion, have not, if they should prevail, a natural *Tendency* to loosen and unhinge Men from any *fix'd* Principles

Principles built on mere *Scripture-Evidence*, to introduce a horrid Confusion into the publick Worship of Christians, and sap the very Foundations of *revealed* Religion, I leave to the Consideration of such as are indeed serious and sober Enquirers after *divine* Truths, those especially; the Belief of which nominates them *Christians*?

YET after all, our Brethren not only *insist* upon it in the most pressing Manner †, That we should not so much as *insinuate* a Difference in our Sentiments concerning the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity*; but seem to be angry with us for saying *, That “ They keep us in the Dark, and “ will not let us know *how* they understand the “ Scriptures, or whose Interpretation they will “ reckon *erroneous*”, &c. Here they interpose; “ And dare our Brethren say, That we keep them in the “ dark, and will not let them know how we understand “ the Scriptures? Have they any other Reason to say “ so, but because we declin’d the propos’d Subscrip- “ tion? — Do we not in the Course of our publick “ Ministrations, speak as plainly, and as fully as they “ can do ††? If this we be meant of the Body, or of the Committee of the *Non-Subscribers*, we dare say, that they keep us very much in the *Dark* how they understand the Scriptures, and whose Interpretation they will judge *erroneous*. Save only that they have taken some Pains in their late *Writings*, to let us know that they do not reckon it *very* ma-

† Reply, Part 1. P. 6.

†† Reply, Part 2. P. 69, 70.

* *Vindication*, P. 47.

terial in *what* Sense the *Scriptures* relating to this Doctrine are understood, as long as Men readily own the *express Words* of Revelation, and take them in *some* Sense or *other*, that appears most probable to themselves. And we *dare* submit our saying *so* to the *Censure* of all *impartial* Men, who know the *State* of our Differences. And we appeal to many of themselves, whether the *Committee* have not given us *other* Reasons to say it, *besides* their declining the propos'd Subscription. What our Brethren do in the *Course* of their publick *Ministrations*, the *Subscribers* are not Judges. We wish them a happy and comfortable *Success* in preaching the *uncorrupted* Doctrine of CHRIST. If in *these* they *speak* as *fully* and *plainly* as the *Subscribers* have done, it is pity something of that *Plainness* and *Fulness* has not appeared in their *more* publick Works, that reach farther than their *ordinary Ministrations* can do. But if their *Ministrations* are blended with *some* of the Notions publish'd in their *Replies* ; if in *them* they are as much upon the *Reserve*, and express themselves with such a *seemingly* studied *Ambiguity*, as they appear to do in their *Advices* to *Exeter*, their *Declaration* of Faith, their *Reasons* for not *Subscribing*, and the *Papers* first mention'd, he must have more than the *second Sight*, who can assuredly gather *what* their *real* Sentiments are with Relation to the *present Differences* about the TRINITY ; only that they seem to regard them with an indifferent Eye, as not worth *contending* about.



C H A P. IV.

An Answer to what is alledged by the Gentlemen of the Committee in Defence of their eight REASON for not Subscribing, and to support the Charge of IMPOSITION exhibited against the SUBSCRIBING Ministers. Their Reflection, under this Head, on the RESOLUTION of the Assembly at Exeter consider'd. Remarks on some other Passages in their Reply.

HAD the Charge of criminal *Imposition* been exhibited against the SUBSCRIBING Ministers, only by the open Enemies of our holy Faith, or by such anonymous *Libellers* as the Writers of the Synod, and the Nature and Consequences of *Enthusiasm* considered, &c. They could silently bear it. But when our Brethren are become our Accusers, and Intimations are given *that they cannot in Conscience free us from that Charge*, our not denying it might be interpreted by some, a tacit Acknowledgment of Guilt. And truly, all that is yet necessary for us to do, is “in Justice to ourselves” to deny there was any Thing of the nature of *Imposition* in our Subscribing the first Article of the

"CHURCH of ENGLAND, and *fifth* and *sixth* Answers of the ASSEMBLIES CATECHISM". Accordingly we have *denied*, and do still *deny* their Charge. The Burden of the Proof lies upon them. And 'till they produce better Evidences, than they have hitherto done to support it, and prove that we are *Imposers, Inquisitors, Persecutors, &c.* our saying that we are *innocent Men*, and have done nothing to deserve those hated *Characters*, will go farther with all equitable Judges, than their *unprov'd Allegations*.

BUT they tell us, ' *That something more is necessary to clear that Act [Subscribing] from the Nature of Imposition, than a bare Denial of it*'†. We may with a much better Grace say, That something more is necessary to fix that Charge on a Body of *Ministers*, who are as hearty Friends of true *Christian Liberty*, and as averse to all *imposing Methods* as any Set of Men in the World, than a frontless Accusation. For, as Mr. *Chillingworth* observes ' *He that will accuse any one Man, much more a number of Men of any great and horrible Crime (as Imposition is own'd on all Hands to be) should in all Reason and Justice take care, that the Greatness of his Evidence do equal, if not exceed the Quality of the Crime*'. Besides, more has been done. The World has been already shew'd, *The Unreasonableness of that Charge*, by one of our Brethren, * * to whose

† Reply, Part 2. Pag. 48. Pag. 249.

* Vid. The Unreasonableness of the Charge of IMPOSITION exhibited against several *Dissenting Ministers* in and about LONDON, &c. by the Reverend Mr. RIDGLEY.

learned Discourse concerning *Creed-making*, and *Imposition*, no Answer has been return'd. Yet the Charge itself has been since renew'd against us. I shall consider what the *Committee* allege to support it †.

THEY say, 'Thus it appear'd to them, and 'and they must judge for themselves' what is *Imposition*. But is this to the Purpose? We demand a Reason of their *Judgment*; and have a Right to do it, if they will bring such a Charge against us. Have they yet produc'd any one solid Argument to prove that our *Act of Subscribing* had much of the Nature of *Imposition* in it? Nothing like it. They put a few Questions; and back these with a *Story* of something done a 150 Miles off, several Weeks after we had *subscribed*; and then conclude, 'If this has not the Nature of 'Imposition,' &c?

BUT in good Earnest; what have the *Subscribers* done to merit so severe a *Censure*? They have made a *publick* Profession of their Faith in the HOLY TRINITY, according to the *Scriptures*! And that, in all Appearance, with a Design to clear themselves from the *Imputation* of secretly favouring the *New Scheme*, which they apprehend is inconsistent with the *Christian Faith*! And perhaps also to encourage others to stand fast in the Profession of the same Faith, without turning aside to ANOTHER JESUS, ANOTHER SPIRIT, and ANOTHER

† Reply, Part 2, P. 58, 59. &c.

GOSPEL! They did more than this. They ventured to offer several Arguments to convince their Brethren of the *Expediency* of doing the *same* Thing; and desired it might be put to the *Vote*, whether the *Assembly* approved of their Proposal! This is the *whole* and *only* Foundation of the heavy Charge of *Imposition* brought against the *Subscribing* Ministers. And doubtless the Reader is now convinced that the *Subscribers* deserve to be branded with all the ill Names that Calumny itself can invent! Presumptuous Men! That they should *take upon them* to profess their Belief of the *Doctrine* of the *Trinity* in *human Words* truly expressing the *Sense* of the *Holy Ghost*! Words which no *Disciple* of Dr. Clark can *honestly* sign!

OUR Brethren would do well, for *their* own Sakes, to blunt the Edge of their Resentment, and *silently* drop their Charge, or leave the Prosecution of it to those who *openly* profess themselves Enemies to *our* Doctrine. For if the *Subscribers* deserve a Character so obnoxious to Mankind, the *Non-Subscribers* have not merited much Praise. Have they not followed our Example, tho' awkwardly? Do they not tell us, 'That they all along shewed a Readiness to come to a Declaration, such a Declaration as would perhaps have been to our mutual Satisfaction?' And that they have actually made a Declaration of *their OWN FAITH*, which no Arian can *honestly* sign? Are their *human Words* less obnoxious than ours, because they are less *explicite*, and
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seem to have more of *Collusion* in them? If it be *criminal* to subscribe any *other* Words than those of *Scripture*, as an *Evidence* of *what* we believe concerning any controverted Point, our Brethren are guilty, if what they appointed their *Moderator* to do in *their Name*, is to be construed their *Act*. If the Evil lies in making a Declaration, in *human Words*, that shall *discriminate* some from *others*, who profess to believe all the *Scripture-Expressions* relating to the Subject of such Declaration, they cannot be innocent who say, *their Declaration contains more than an Arian can honestly sign*? Or was this Qualification of it merely *accidental*, without any *Counsel* or *Design* of theirs? Or did they disown the *Arian Doctrine* in general Terms only, because they supposed the Followers of Dr. Clark might honestly do the same? (yea the old *Arians* might do it in the very Terms our Brethren have used, meaning by the *Arian Doctrine* some *Peculiarities* of that Man.) Or did they therefore *not sign* their Declaration *personally*, as they *sign'd* their *Advices*, out of Complaisance to such, as could not in any Construction of the Words, *renounce the Arian Doctrine*? And that Individuals might be able to say at any convenient Time, it was none of their Declaration, they did not approve of *such* a Clause, no express Consent was insisted on, they stood *Neuters*, they lik'd it *in the main*, and so were content it should pass into the World? Which way soever we take it, thus far the Advantage manifestly lies on the Side of the *Subscribers*, that they have
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acted *openly* and above Board, without giving any room to suspect them of *Equivocation*, or mental Reservation.

AFTER all, they will have it so, That our very *Act* of Subscribing *had much of the Nature of Imposition in it*. But they might as well say it had the Nature of *Magick*, and prove it *too* by as good Arguments as any they have produc'd to prove it *Imposition*. Did they *impose* their *Advices* by *Subscribing* them? Or, their own *Declaration* of Faith by appointing a *Moderator* to set his Hand to it: "They were not indeed as forward to be known "by *signing* a *Declaration* of their own Faith, as "by *signing* *Advices* to *others*;" but whether this be for their Honour or not, their *Act* of *subscribing* must have as much the *Nature* of *Imposition* as *ours*.

Is our *Declaration* of such a malignant Influence, that whoever *subscribes* it as a *Witness* of his own Faith, must be thereby suppos'd to lay *Burdens* on the *Shoulders* of other *Men*? Or, to impose what they do, on the *Consciences* of others? Might not our Brethren have declar'd themselves on this wise; *We heartily subscribe to the first Article of the Church of England*—as what we believe to be the *Doctrine* of the ever *Blessed Trinity*, revealed in *Holy Scriptures*: "But are far from condemning any who appear to be with us in the main, "tho' they should not chuse to declare themselves in "other than *Scripture-Terms*, or not in *ours*". Is there any Contradiction between this last Clause, and the Matter of our *Declaration*? Would this be

be to *impose* it upon others ? Why did they not adopt this *Article*, or the *Answers* in the *Assemblies's Catechism*, with such a *Proviso*, if they really believed that they *truly* express the *Sense* of the *Holy Ghost*, and are indeed the *Scripture-Doctrine* ? Their not doing this, or any Thing equivalent to it ; their chusing to do *otherwise*, to form a Declaration of their own which leaves every Man in the dark as to their real Sentiments, has tempted many to think, that the *Non-Subscribers* were not agreed concerning the *Doctrine* itself.

IF it be *objected*, that the *Subscribers* did not *thus* qualify their Declaration of Faith ?

Answer I. They could not consistently do it, because it is not their Opinion (as it is the declared Sentiment of the *Non-Subscribers*) that a Man's owning the *Letter* or *Terms* of Scripture, is of itself, a sufficient Evidence of his Soundness in the Faith. They believe, they *know* that this is done by those who *wrest* the Scriptures, and destroy the Faith. II. They did not qualify their Declaration with such an additional Clause. What then ? Does it therefore follow that they *impos'd* it ? Or, made it necessary for others to *subscribe* the *same* Form of Words ? Is there any thing like this in the Declaration *itself* ? Did they pass any *Vote* or *Resolution* to condemn those as *unsound* in the Faith, who should refuse to *sign* as they did ? Did they not do the contrary ? Did they *authoritatively* impose *their* Declaration upon any ? Or, require *Subscription* to it with *Menaces* and *Threats* in Case of a *Non-Compliance* ? Far from it. Nothing like this can with any *Justice* be alleged a-

gainst them. And to insinuate without Proof, that the Body of the *Subscribing-Ministers* used any *Methods of Terror*, to draw others to their Subscription, is an *Artifice* which Men of Honour and Veracity, especially Christian *Divines* should be ashamed of.

YET this is the Case. Such Things are insinuated against us by the *Committee*. We may be allowed to examine their Evidence. It begins with a palpable *Contradiction*. We had pleaded in our *Vindication*, That what we did was with the greatest *Freedom*, that there were no *Methods of Compulsion* upon others, and that every *Man* was left to his own *Liberty*. They reply, † ‘ ’Tis true, our Brethren have no Power to compel, or to use external FORCE; and we hope they have no Disposition to it. But was there not all the FORCE used which they HAD IN THEIR POWER?’ If these last Words were intended to signify any Thing, it must be to intimate that we had some Force in our Power, and used it. Now all Force is external except that of Reason and Argument, the use of which was never yet called *Imposition*. Let them therefore prove that there is some other kind of Force that is not external, the use of which is *Imposition*; or, confess that their Question is a grand Impertinence, without any true Sense or Meaning; or, not take it ill, if I put their Sense into this Form, The SUBSCRIBERS indeed had no Power

† Reply, Part. 2. p. 52.

to compel, or to use external Force; and we (charitably) hope they had no Inclination to it; nevertheless, they had some external Force in their Power, and made use of it too. They must be very weak, or very partial Judges, who would condemn a Man upon such Evidence as this.

THEY go on. 'Were there no Intimations of our being mark'd and branded? No Hints that we should repent our not subscribing?' I will stand to it that no such Intimations were given by the Body of the Subscribers. And if any particular Persons gave Hints of this kind, in an angry or in a friendly Way, it can never prove that our Act of subscribing had the Nature of Imposition, which is the thing they have undertaken to prove. 'Was there not a very angry breaking away from us; and so a threatening of every thing which could be the Effect of their Displeasure?' This is false and invidious. There was neither Anger nor Threatning on our part in that Division, but a serious hearty Grief for the unhappy Occasion of it.

'T is added, 'Was not the Resentment carried so far, as to refuse a Return to us? Protesting against all we did without subscribing?'

THERE is something more magisterial in these Interrogatives, than in any Act of the SUBSCRIBING Ministers. But with your leave Gentlemen, by what Authority could you demand our Return? It appear'd upon a Scrutiny, that there was a great Majority of Pastors on our Side. And that we lost the important Question by the

auxiliary *Votes* of those who were neither *Pastors* of Churches, nor stated *Ministers* in any Congregation. What right then had you to challenge *our Return* to you, to consider of *Advices* which we did not like, and that after you had pass'd some of them without us? Must the *Body* of the LONDON *Ministers*, or the greatest part of them, be accounted *Imposers*, because they would not be tamely impos'd upon? We *protested* against what you were doing, because we apprehended that without an *explicite DECLARATION of Faith*, your *Advices* would do more *Harm* than *Good*. And we now lament that your *resisting* that importunate CALL of *Providence*, to bear your Testimony for a *blasphemed TRUTH*, has ever since greatly embolden'd the Enemies of our commn Faith, and encourag'd them with less Fear, and more Impudence to propagate their pernicious Errors. But must our *Protesting* too have the Nature of *Imposition*? Is it reckon'd so in other *publick Assemblies*? May they not as well say, that our *Preaching* is *Imposition*, as either our *Protesting* or *Subscribing*? Hard is the Fate of the *Subscribers* if every *Act* of *theirs* must be construed an assuming Authority over the Consciences of others! Is this the Treatment they are to expect from their *Fellow Christians* and *Fellow Labourers*, for having dar'd in a blaspheming Age, by open Subscription to avow their Faith in the ever BLESSED TRINITY, ' according to what the Prophets have ' taught us, what the Gospel preaches to us, ' what the Apostles left us by Tradition, what ' the

the Martyrs confess'd in their Sufferings †, and what the Church has maintain'd in all Ages.

THEY farther ask, ' *Was there not a denying to admit our VIIIth Article, as a Means of common Peace?* '

BUT what is this to our *Subscription* which was several Days before? Must that *Act* of ours have much of the Nature of *Imposition*, because sometime after we were not satisfied about their 8th Article? "What Name shall we give to such a Way of Reasoning as this?" *Was there not a denying to admit the first ARTICLE of the Church of England as a joint Testimony of our common Faith?* What if we should infer from hence that they denied the Faith? Would not the Conclusion be as *Logical* as what they infer from our not admitting their 8th Article? It is the last in their *Advices*, and runs thus *; ' *If any Minister or Congregation shall differ as to the Expediency of these Methods, or shall think any other more proper, we hope they will, as intending the same good End, still preserve Charity and COMMUNION with those Ministers and Congregations that shall think fit to pursue these ADVICES.* '

NOW we postpon'd admitting this Article for these Reasons. I. Because we thought it needless to give in to it, having, before that Proposal was made, voted that we would not charge

† Phebadius.

* *Authentick Account*, pag. 10, 11.

our Brethren with *Unsoundness* in the Faith, merely for their *not* signing *our* Declaration. With which we order'd they should be acquainted. 2. Had we by a publick *Vote* or *Subscription* agreed to *that* Article, we were apprehensive it might be construed an Approbation of the foregoing *Advices* to which it relates; which we could not assent to for *any* *Reward*. 3. The Article itself seems ensnaring: For tho' we never refused (nor do refuse) to maintain *Friendship* and COMMUNION with our Brethren, as far as Knowledge and Judgment would carry us; yet we were unwilling to declare in the *General*, that we would hold COMMUNION *with those* who should *think fit* to pursue *these* *Advices*; because we knew not but this might comprehend Persons with whom we can have no Fellowship in Things sacred. We are still of Opinion that *these* *Advices* are very agreeable to the Taste of *Arians* and *Socinians*. And whatever our Brethren may do, we have no Freedom to *communicate* with such either in *Baptism*, or the *LORD's Supper*. Nor do we desire, whatever we may suffer by it in our worldly Interests, that they should have any Freedom to unite with us in these *Ordinances*: Tho' we shall be ever glad to shew them all Offices of Humanity and Respect, and do all that lies in our Power, or is made our Duty to do, for their Temporal and Eternal Good. For these Reasons we left their 8th Article to farther Consideration; and let impartial Men judge whether our so doing is a good Proof that our

Act of Subscribing had the Nature of *Imposition*?

THEY sum up their *immediate* Evidence thus: 'Has not our Non-Subscribing been used to bring us under Disreputation; and that in the most flagrant Manner, and with great Injustice, and for a great while together, without any publick Notice and Discountenance! These Things spoil the Boast of leaving every Man to his own Liberty.—— Till all Censure, Reproach, and every Kind of Injury, merely for not Subscribing, be effectually taken away, it will leave our Reason much stronger than we wish it to be. Something to this good Purpose we had ground to expect in our Brethrens Answer, &c.'

To which I answer.

I. WE have been sometimes told, that the greatest Difficulty our Brethren had, was to clear the Reputation of the Subscribers, and take off the Reproach of their being Imposers and Persecutors; which they themselves had thrown upon us.

II. The Disreputation complain'd of, has not been occasion'd merely by their not Subscribing; but by other more positive Acts, and Declarations of their own; of which already. I shall only observe that they must be very sensible what Kind of Reputation it gives to their Cause, that it has been warmly espous'd by many who appear to have no Regard to Reveal'd Religion; and that, abstracted from the Writings of our Brethren themselves, among the numberless

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Pamphlets have been publish'd against the *Subscribers*, there is not *one*, as far as I can remember, in which the true eternal *Godhead* of our *LORD* and *Saviour*, is not either *blasphemed* or *oppugned*.

III. THE *Subscribers* have neither *practiced* nor *encouraged* any *Injustice* towards their *Brethren*. God forbid. Their *Care* should be how to *learn Obedience* by the *railing Accusations*, and other *Wrongs* which they themselves *suffer*.

IV. WHAT new *Logick* is this, *Our Non-Subscribing* has been used to bring us under *Disreputation*, therefore your *Subscribing* was an *Imposition*? One would be tempted to think from their *Way of Arguing*, that they really wanted some new *Explications* to give a determinate *Sense* to the *Word Imposition*. It might be call'd *Cant* if I should ask, do the *Saints* impose upon the *World*, because their *Practice* condemns the *World*, or brings worldly *Men* under *Disreputation*? I am far from applying this to our *Brethren*, many of whom I esteem better than my self; but the *Reasoning* is as good in the one *Case*, as in the other. What the *Subscribers* did, they did out of *Conscience of Duty*. Had they done otherwise they had *sinned*. They can appeal to *GOD*, and to the *World* too that they neither *design'd* nor *practic'd* any *Imposition*. And if their doing what they apprehended to be a present necessary *Duty*, has accidentally brought others under *Disreputation*, they are not accountable for it.

V. OUR

V. OUR *not signing the Pacifick Advices has been us'd to bring us under Disreputation, and that in the most flagrant Manner, and with great Injustice, &c.* Did they therefore impose their *Pacificks*, or had their *signing* of them the Nature of *Imposition*? We may justly say, If there was any *Imposition* in the Case, it was *intirely* on their side who brought that Engine of Strife into our *Assembly*, and push'd it on with that Vehemence, *Quasi in certamine calum*, tho' they could not but see, from our first Debates, it would cause more *Division* here, than it could possibly heal any where else. But it seems a Tryal was to be made according to Mr. Peirce's Wish, how far 'the Friends † of Liberty as he calls them) might be 'form'd into one Party, without any Subdivision, 'being able to bear and join with one another, notwithstanding their different Sentiments, about abstruse 'Matters, or Modes of Worship.' That is, whatever their Sentiments might be concerning the Holy Trinity, and whether they worship'd the Holy Ghost or no. But we do not envy them any Success their *Experiment* has had. And we hope we have shewn to the World, and will still demonstrate by our future Conduct, that *Ministers* of the Gospel may be true *Patrons* of *Christian Liberty*, without abating ought of their Zeal for that Faith, in which we must live and die unless we will renounce our *Baptism*.

VI. THE *Gentlemen* of the *Committee* put too great an Honour upon the *Subscribers*, if they

† Mr. Peirce's Defence, &c. pag. 23.

look for a Vindication from those who are themselves loaded with *Reproach*: When they may much more *effectually* clear themselves to the Satisfaction of all concern'd, even *without* signing our Declaration. How easy is it for them to *state* the *Errors* that are contrary to the *receiv'd Doctrine*, whatever *Names* they may be distinguish'd by, and utterly to disown those Errors, and express their Regard to the *opposite Truths*, in *such Words* as may *explicitly* convey *their Sense* of those parts of Scripture that relate to them, and *distinguish* their real Sentiments from the Errors they condemn? And if it will be any Satisfaction to them, I dare say the *Subscribers* will renounce *Popery*, and all *Principles* and *Methods* of *Imposition*, and signify their Belief of the *Perfection* and *Sufficiency* of the *Holy Scriptures* as the only Rule of Faith and Practice, in the strongest Terms they can propose. This I presume to offer as the most effectual Means of *common Peace*. In the mean Time we shall be ready to *discountenance* all rash *Censures* of any sort, especially those we know to be *unreasonable* and *unjust*. Nor can they blame us if we esteem the Charge of *Imposition* brought against ourselves, as a *Censure* of that kind, notwithstanding all that has been urg'd to support it.

THIS is all they *directly* allege against us to prove their Assertion, that our *Subscribing* had the Nature of *Imposition*. And we may reasonably presume, if they could produce stronger Proofs, we should have found them in their Observations on this *Head*.

As for the RESOLUTION of the *Assembly* at *Exon*, in *May* last, (which is the *next* thing they mention) it can hardly prove us *Imposers*. Whatever Strefs the *Gentlemen* of the *Committee* might lay upon this Argument, which it seems *improves upon their Hands*, yet few Readers will be so stupid as to conclude, that the *Declaration* of the *LONDON Ministers* had the *Nature of Imposition*, because the *united Ministers* of *Devon* and *Cornwal*, pass'd a certain *Vote* in their *Assembly* two *Months* after. If it be said that we approve of their Conduct in this particular, and by *Consequence* make their *Resolution* our own: This, I grant is what we ought to do; and perhaps they are not mistaken in supposing there is a *Harmony* between us, in our Thoughts about this Matter.

LET us therefore see whether their *Resolution* (with which I should not meddle; were it not produc'd to fortify the Censure pass'd on our *Subscription*) had it been an *Act* of ours, would prove us *Imposers*, *Inquisitors*, *Persecutors*, &c. It amounts to this, That they cannot in *Conscience* ordain any Person to the *Ministry*, unless he professeth his *Assent* to the *Article* or *Answers* subscrib'd by us; or to this *Sum* of them, *That there is but one living and true God, and that the Father, Word, and Holy Ghost are that one God.* To which they add, 'It is not the *Design* of the *Assembly* by this
' RESOLUTION to exclude any Persons from the *Ministry*, who shall in any other human Words than,

‘ *these here mention’d, sufficiently express the Soundness of their Faith in the SACRED TRINITY †.*’

HERE is no *Subscription* to any particular *Form* of Words insisted on : But only that *Candidates* for the *Ministry*, or such as seek to be *ordained*, or recommended by *them* to any *Congregation*, should either signify their *Assent* to what is refer’d to, or in any other *human Words*, sufficiently express the *Soundness* of their Faith in the *sacred Trinity*. This is the *Resolution* against which such fearful *Outcries* are made! In Mr. *Peirces’s* *Stile* it is the *Western INQUISITION*. Nor will the *Non-Subscribers* be behind-hand with him; ‘ *If this (say they) has not the Nature of IMPOSITION, it must be own’d we want some new Explications to give a determinate Sense to the Words of our own Language, as well as to the Words of Scripture*.*’ But do they think that Men will be bubbled out of their Senses by such Exclamations ? Have they offer’d any one Argument to prove that this is *Imposition* ? ’Tis to be hop’d that upon cooler Thoughts, our Brethren will be asham’d of their scandalous Reflection, on a *Resolution* which is just at all Times, and was necessary at a Time, when the worst of *Heresies* are propagated under the *Umbrage* of adhering to the *Words* of Scripture.

BUT what do they mean by giving a *determinate Sense* to the *Words* of Scripture ? Would they insinuate by this, that we pretend to give a *determinate Sense* to these *Words* ? This appears to be

† Account of what was transacted in the Assembly at EXON, May 5. 1719.

* Reply, Part 2. P. 60.

the *Sense* of their 7th Reason for not *Subscribing*†. But we have declar'd, * " We never did, nor do " in the *least* pretend to make the *Explications* of " Men a Rule to determine the *Sense* of Scripture ; [so as to give them any *Sense* besides their own real determinate *Sense*] " but only make use of our " own and other Mens Words in expressing what " we believe the Scripture, by all just and reason- " ble Rules of Interpretation, does evidently de- " termine to be its own *Sense*." And is there no Difference between giving a determinate *Sense* to Scripture, and declaring in the best manner we can, what we take to be the *Sense* of Scripture ? It seems they know of none. ' We wish (say they) *** our Brethren had been a little more ex- ' press on this Head; and had opened to us a little ' farther, the Difference of subscribing the *Explica-* ' tions of Men as the determinate *Sense* of Scrip- ' ture ; and using them as determining the *Sense* of ' Scripture ; for it is at present what we do not under- ' stand, as applicable to our Case.' We wish it were in our Power to help their Understanding ; but at present we think the *Distinction* is so easy and intelligible that we know not how to make it more so. When they preach, do they not in their own Words signify what they believe is the *Sense* of Scripture ? And will they call this the same with giving a determinate *Sense* to Scripture ?

THEIR Reasoning follows. ' Either the ' Scriptures have a determinate *Sense* of their own ' without the help of Mens *Explications*, or they have

† Authentick Account, p 26. 27.

* Vindication, p. 39.

** Reply, Part II. P. 57.

' not. '

‘not.’ * They might have spar’d themselves the trouble of making this a Matter of Debate. If we did not apprehend that the *Scriptures* have a determinate *Sense* of *their own*, the World had never heard of our *Declaration* of Faith; nor should we complain of others, for keeping us in the dark *how* they understand the *Scriptures*. Well, ’tis granted they have a *Sense* of *their own*; what then? ‘If they have *SUCH* a determinate *Sense* of *their own*, that determinate *Sense* is every way sufficient, (doubtless it is.) And to be prefer’d to any other; (yes.) Nor is any other to be made equal with it, or set above it; (by no means.) Nor therefore to be used, (not at all, much less) where there is the least ground of *Suspicion* it is used as a *Standard* of Faith.’ The Words inclos’d shew how exactly we agree in our Sentiments. But after all, is not this a very *senseless* Observation? What does the Word *SUCH* refer to? Who ever question’d that the *determinate Sense* of *Scripture* is to be prefer’d to any other *Sense* of *Scripture*, that is not the *real* or *determinate Sense*? Do they imagine that the *Subscribers* are for setting any *Sense* of *Scripture*, above the *determinate Sense* of *Scripture*? Or, that they are so *senseless* as to think there is any *Sense* of *Scripture* but the *real* and *determinate Sense*? I can assure them the *Subscribers* never dreamt any thing like this.

THEY proceed, ‘But if they [the *Scriptures*] have not *SUCH* a determinate *Sense* of *their own*, and the *Explications* of Men are suppos’d necessary

* Reply, Part II. P. 57.

' to make Determinations for them, such Explications do then certainly determine their Sense.' I have some Suspicion that the *Writer* of this part of the *Reply* was wonderfully transported by the frequent Repetition of the Word *Sense*. But who are they who suppose that the *Scriptures* have not a determinate *Sense* of their own? Or, that the *Explications* of Men are necessary to make *Determinations* for them? Or, that it is possible any *Explications* can determine the *Sense* of those *Scriptures* that have no determinate *Sense* of their own? Suppose the foregoing Words of a *Non-Subscriber* were *Senseless* Words, or Words that had no determinate *Sense* of their own, what *Explications* of a *Subscriber* could certainly determine their *Sense*?

BUT what Occasion was there for all this Amusement? The *Scriptures* have a determinate *Sense* of their own. That *Sense* is every way sufficient, and no other is to be prefer'd to it. In Things necessary to be believ'd or practic'd, we have certain Means and Helps by which we may assuredly know the determinate *Sense* of *Scripture*. We believe that our *Declaration* is the real and determinate *Sense* of those *Scriptures* that relate to the *sacred Trinity*: And that this *Sense* was not given to them, or determin'd for them, by us, or by any *Convocation* or *Assembly* of fallible Men; but was the determinate *Sense* of *Scripture* in the *Apostle John's* Time; and that the *Scriptures* themselves, and not any *Explications* of Men have determin'd this to be their own *Sense*. For this Reason we prefer it to all other *Senses* whatsoever, whether

whether of *Arius*, or *Socinus*, or *Dr. Clark*. We are also of Opinion, that *what*, by all the *just* and *reasonable* Rules of Interpretation, appears to us to be *the Sense* of Scripture, must be regarded by us *as such*, or as the *Matter of our Faith*. Consequently, whoever denies *such* Sense must be accounted by us to be in an Error, and so far, to deny the *Scripture-Doctrine*; otherwise, we must account ourselves to be in an Error, and to have renounc'd the Doctrine of Scripture: Since it is absurd to talk of believing the Scriptures in any necessary part of Faith, without believing and receiving them in their *true* Sense. And equally so, to suppose they have different or contradictory *Meanings*. We are likewise abundantly satisfy'd that *barely* to own the *Scripture Words* is no Evidence to us that they are *rightly* understood, or *not* understood in a Sense destructive of the Faith, because tho' the genuine *Sense* of Scripture be but one, yet thro' the Weakness of some, and the Pride of others, *contradictory* Senses may be, and actually are put upon them.

FROM all which we conclude, That if *Candidates* for the *Ministry* are in Reason and Conscience obliged to satisfy their *Ordainers*, that they are *sound* in the Faith; if *Ministers* cannot with *Judgment* and a good Conscience *separate* any to that *Work* without Satisfaction in this Matter; it is no *Imposition* to require a *Confession of their Faith* in other than express Words of Scripture. This is so plain, and the Thing itself has been so frequently practis'd among *Protestant Dissenters*, that we wonder some who have thought fit to publish

publish their *own Confessions*, should now be against requiring any *such* Confessions, and flee for Refuge to that old *Arian* and *Socinian* Trick, of expressing *Articles of Faith* in *Scripture-Terms* only. A Plea that carries such an Air of *Equivocation* and *Deceit* in the very Face of it, and argues such an *Indifference* in Matters of Faith, that however it may take for some Time with the *Ignorant* or *Weak*, or *Sceptical*, it can never impose on those who have not out-liv'd their *Judgment*, or who have Eyes in their Head to discern between upright Dealing and a guileful Abuse of Words.

IF the *Assembly* at *Exon* had peremptorily resolv'd to admit of none who should refuse Subscription to one *certain* Form, this might be thought a Hardship; but when Men are left at *Liberty* to use their own Words, when all that is insisted on is, that they use such *human Words* as may sufficiently express the Soundness of their Faith in the *sacred Trinity*; for *human Creatures* to complain of this as an *Imposition*; to have recourse here to formal Passages of Scripture, to pretend that *barely* to acknowledge the *literal Text* is a *sufficient* Indication of a Man's Faith, what he *believes*, what *Notions* or *Consequences* are form'd and deduc'd from the Scriptures, is an *Imposition* on the Sense and Reason of all the World; an *Imposture* so poor and trifling that all discerning Persons must be asham'd of it. Nor is it possible for a Man of Sense to plead for it; until he first lays it down as a *Principle*, That

understand.

A a a

Arians

Arians, Socinians, and all other Denominations of Men professing the Christian Name, may notwithstanding their contradictory Persuasions, be found in the Faith, and be justly accounted to hold the Scripture Doctrine, so far as is necessary to qualify Men for the Work of the Ministry, and Oversight of Christian Churches.

THE Gentlemen of the Committee are not perhaps aware, that in condemning the Resolution of the Assembly at Exeter, they contradict themselves.

I think I can make them sensible of this. But shall first profess my Assent to the Words that immediately go before the Passage I refer to. 'They cannot discern it to be the Duty of their Office, or necessary to the Peace and Comfort of a Christian Society, to be free and open in declaring their Faith, in such human Words as others shall prescribe to them. * In this we are agreed. Nor did we ever say that it was absolutely the Duty of Ministers to declare their Faith in such human Words as others might prescribe to them. It can never be the Duty of their Office to declare a Lie. This we are persuaded a disguis'd Arian or Socinian would do, if he declar'd his Faith in the Words of our Declaration. But then to be sincere (supposing him related to a People who believ'd That Declaration to be the Scripture Doctrine, and who, upon Suspicion given, desir'd to be satisfy'd whether that was his Faith or no;) he ought to

* Reply, Part 2, P. 9.

declare, that he would *not subscribe*, or profess his *Assent*, because he did *not* believe what was propos'd to him. And it can never belong to the *Duty* of a Ministers *Office*, nor contribute to the *peace* and *Comfort* of a *Christian Society*, to walk in *Disguise* with his People, and *impose* upon them a *fraudulent* Confession of his Faith. This can never consist with that *Sincerity* with which the first *Ministers* of *CHRIST* recommended *themselves*, and their *Doctrine* unto the Consciences of Men. *We* are not, saith *St. Paul*, as many who deal deceitfully with the *Word* of *God*, but as of *Sincerity*, but as of *God*, in the *Sight* of *God*, speak we in *CHRIST*. 2 Cor. 2, 17. And if they deal not *deceitfully* with his *Word*, who make use of *that Word* as a *Cover* to *Sentiments* which they dare not own, and which they can have no *Temptation* to *conceal*, but that of *filthy Lucre*, or some other carnal *Motive*, it will be hard to tell who are the *ἀνάνιοι* condemn'd by the *Apostle*.

I come now to the Words in which I think, they pass themselves under the same Censure which they thought it becoming the *Duty* of their *Office* to bring upon the Resolution of the *Western Assembly*. ' It appears to us, that nothing more can
' reasonably be required of a Minister, for the satis-
' fying of his People in such a Case, than that he de-
' clare his Belief of what the Scripture makes a part
' of the *Christian Faith*, as to any Matter in question;
' and that he be willing upon every proper occasion to
' give his *SENSE* of those parts of Scripture, in which
' these Points of Faith are delivered, in such Words

'as he thinks most proper to convey his Sense'. † The People all this while being judges for themselves whether the *Sense* given be such as renders it safe for them to sit under his *Ministry*.

Now if this may be reasonably requir'd of a *Minister* for the satisfying of his *People*, it may be requir'd of a *Candidate* for the satisfying of *those* to whom he applies for *Ordination* to the *Ministry*. And does the *Resolution* of the *Assembly* at *Exeter* amount to more? Do they not declare that it is not their *Design* to exclude any from the *Ministry*, who shall in any other human *Words* than those adopted by them, sufficiently express the *Soundness* of their *Faith* in the *sacred Trinity*? Or, do the *Committee* think that a *Man* may give his *Sense* of those parts of *Scripture*, that relate to any controverted *Point* of *Faith*, without the use of any human *Words*? This is a strange way of declaring our *Sense* of *Scripture*, and which deserves to be exploded with the utmost *Contempt*. In short, if our *Brethren* will be consistent with themselves, they must either explain away what they grant may be reasonably requir'd of a *Minister*, or retract the *Censure* they pass upon the *Subscribing Ministers*, and the *Resolution* of the *Assembly*; which appears to me to be one of the most shocking Things in their *Reply*. For what may we not apprehend, when under the *Covert* of *Christian Liberty*, such a *Resolution* as is now before us shall be condemn'd as an *Imposition*! When it shall be declar'd a thing intollerable to

† *Reply*, Part II. P. 57.

require of young *Students*, that before their Admission into the *Ministerial Office*, they do in *some* human Words or *other sufficiently* exprefs the *Soundness* of their Faith in the ever BLESSED TRINITY! It is easy to see what this tends to, and what *Cause* it will serve. But we hope our Brethren will be better *advise'd*: And when they consider Things more closely, practice that themselves, which they have too hastily condemn'd as an *Imposition* in others.



F I N I S.



ERRATA.

PAGE 7. l. 8. *r. qvads*; p. 12. *Marg. l. 3. r. DEITY*. p. 46. l. 5.
r. Glosses. p. 75. l. 22. *r. Counsels*. p. 78. *Marg. l. 43. r. Per-*
fections. p. 105. l. 15. *r. antient*. p. 108. l. 12. *dele do*. p. 121. l. 5.
r. reject. p. 124. l. 18. *dele* under the. p. 127. *Contents*. l. 13. *r.*
Judgment. p. 130. l. 29. *r. any*. p. 138. l. 18. *r. Patronizes*. p. 184.
l. 1. *r. prohibet*. p. 188. *Marg. l. 14. r. n̄v*. p. 191. *Marg. l. 26. r. his*
Hand. p. 216. l. 5. *r. marking*. p. 230. l. 21. *r. conceive*. p. 251. l. ult.
dele as a Body. p. 305. l. 2. *r. the*. p. 311. l. 12. *r. Person*. p. 316.
l. 23. *r. Perspicuity*. p. 335. l. 1. *dele a*. p. 341. l. 6. *dele* and